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MUSIC IN THE NATION

By the same author

A BOOK OF THE SYMPHONY

MUSIC ON RECORDS

MUSIC FOR THE MAN WHO ENJOYS "HAMLET"

B . H . H A G G I N

MUSIC
in the
NATION

WILLIAM SLOANE ASSOCIATES, INC.
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Introduction

The primary and important aim of criticism, E. M. Forster has said, is aesthetic: "It considers the object in itself, as an entity, and tells us what it can about its life." And he warns that "if criticism strays from her central aesthetic quest to influences and psychological and historical considerations . . . contact is established. But no longer with a work of art."

Discovering the life in a work of art is not easy; nor is describing it. And the people for whom it is described create additional difficulties. Most of them have no idea of criticism being concerned primarily with the life in a work of art: they have been misled into thinking of it rather as concerned with "influences and psychological and historical considerations." Above all they have no idea of the critic being concerned with the life *he* perceives in the work: they think of him as applying to it an equipment of principles for the discovery of Beauty, and arriving by this means at one of the accepted judgments concerning the established merit of every one of the achievements of every one of the "great composers." Hence they are completely unprepared for, and disconcerted, bewildered and angered by, a critic who is concerned not with the Beauty which exists only between the covers of books on aesthetics, but with the particular piece of music he encounters in the concert-hall or on the radio; who applies to this music his personal equipment of sensitiveness, emotion, experience, and intellect; and who reports—as the result of the interaction—findings different from the accepted. The critical revaluation of a great name in literature or drama they take as a matter of course; but let a critic question the accepted valuation of a concerto of Brahms or Rachmaninov or an opera of Puccini, and there is trouble.

And so, wondering how to introduce the writing in this book to those who haven't read it in *The Nation*, I have decided it would be a good idea to anticipate trouble this time by printing

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here an article I wrote in October, 1936, in the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle*. What follows is that article.

In a discussion, last Spring, of the problem of letters of protest and of the letter, in particular, that ended with the statement "If the editors of *The Nation* agree with that opinion they are fools; if they do not agree with it they should have thrown the review into the wastebasket," Joseph Wood Krutch explained that the editors, in printing a review, did not thereby express agreement with it; that their sponsorship went no further than to choose "a man of intelligence and taste who has, besides, some special competence relative to the book in question," and to believe that the opinion of such a man, however different from their own (and, he might have added, from the opinions of their readers), had a right to be heard.

This attitude, which is obviously the correct one for editor and readers to take, does two things: it denies the critic's infallibility, and at the same time establishes his inviolability, and it does this not only for the writer of an occasional book review, but for the man whom an editor has chosen to review plays, motion pictures or music. The readers of a newspaper, sitting in their own living rooms, would consider it perfectly natural that some among them had liked a play or a musical performance and others had not; that some thought one way about the Metropolitan as an institution and others another way; they would understand that such differences in response and opinion must exist in people differently constituted and equipped; and it would not occur to them that such differences should be forbidden. But when they open their newspaper their attitude changes; they now believe in the existence of a single Correct Opinion, which they expect to hear from the lips of the newspaper's critic; but this can be only the opinion which they have themselves arrived at; and if it turns out that his opinion is different from theirs, they would forbid him to utter it.

Now the editor of the newspaper does not start with an assumption of the critic's infallibility, but only with a decision on

his competence and honesty. He wants authoritative appraisal of the play, the motion picture or the concert, and for this he gets a "man of intelligence and taste who has, besides, some special competence." But he is aware that there are other such men who will be affected differently by what they see and hear and that what he publishes is not the single Correct Opinion, but only one of a number of possible opinions that derive their validity from the intelligence, taste, and special competence of their authors—of these opinions the one that represents the particular combination of intelligence, taste, and special competence which he has decided shall be exercised on the subject for his paper. This decision once made, therefore, he will publish his critic's judgment of a play or a musical performance even though it differs from another critic's judgment.

He will also publish it though it differs from the judgments of the paper's readers—even of a reader with special competence on the subject, and certainly of a reader without this competence. For he could have the review written by a layman who would write of what a layman sees and hears; but instead he has chosen to have it written by an expert whose perceptions and judgments, he knows, will be different from those of the inexpert in the audience—who, that is, will notice things to enjoy which they will overlook, and will find ground for criticism in what they will enjoy. Having made this choice, he will publish his critic's unfavorable criticism of what some readers of the paper liked, and in this way he will affirm the validity of the reader's judgment for himself and of the critic's judgment for the paper, and the principle that one reads a newspaper review not to find one's own opinion confirmed, but only to learn what the opinion of the paper's critic happens to be.

Like Mr. Krutch I am led to make these observations by actual difficulties that arise occasionally—difficulties which, indeed, I foresaw might arise, and in anticipation of which I devoted my first articles in this paper to the music criticism of Bernard Shaw. I did this partly because of the superb quality

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of the criticism—the soundness and penetration of the judgments, the brilliance of the writing. But I did it also, as I explained, because of his conception of the function and responsibilities of a critic. He dealt not only with the particular musical event but with the entire musical scene of which the event was an integral part; in this his duty, as he saw it, was to judge, and to let nothing deflect his judgment; and he evaded no issue and minced no words. With all this I agreed, and I went into it in order that the reader might know what to expect of me. I had, I explained, intense love for great music perfectly realized in performance, as it is by only a very small number of players; and this meant that with many concerts I would feel and have to express dissatisfaction in varying degree. I had also intense interest in the organization of our musical life, the machinery of musical activity, the way in which this machinery operates to make music accessible; and here my dissatisfactions would be even greater.

I also allowed Shaw to reveal the difficulties in the way of a critic's functioning as he did and I proposed to do—the influences working to deflect or silence the critic's judgment. There was the impresario's plea for criticism that was helpful, constructive, considerate of the fact that he was doing the utmost that existing circumstances allowed. "That does not shake me," answered Shaw, "since I know that the critic who accepts existing circumstances loses from that moment all his dynamic quality. . . . His real business is to find fault; to ask for more; to knock his head against stone walls, in the full assurance that three or four good heads will batter down any wall that stands across the world's path." There were the people who "pointed out evidences of personal feeling in my notices as if they were accusing me of a misdemeanor, not knowing that a criticism written without personal feeling is not worth reading. It is the capacity for making good or bad art a personal matter that makes a man a critic. . . . The true critic is the man who becomes your personal enemy on the sole provocation of a bad performance, and will only be appeased by good performances."

And there were the protests of "artists insatiable by the richest and most frequent doses of praise; entrepreneurs greedy for advertisement; people without reputations who want to beg or buy them ready-made; the rivals of the praised; the friends, relatives, partisans, and patrons of the damned"—some of whom I, too, have heard from on occasion.

Toward all this Shaw's editor held the attitude I outlined earlier in the present article; for Shaw continued to write as he had written, in complete disregard of the pleading, protest, and indignation; if he had not been permitted to do so he would not have written at all. And I can write also only on the assumption that I am to apply such general intelligence and musical taste, understanding, and judgment as I possess to the matters that are within my province.

As for acknowledgments, I have first to express my gratitude to Mark Van Doren, who gave me the opportunity to do my first occasional writing for *The Nation*, including the earliest articles and book reviews in this collection. And to Mr. Van Doren and Margaret Marshall for treatment which I consider a model of editorial behavior—above all their willingness to let a writer do his own writing. I should perhaps thank a former literary editor of another liberal weekly for teaching me to appreciate fully this civilized editorial attitude of Mr. Van Doren and Miss Marshall. And a certain publisher for similarly teaching me to appreciate the personal and publishing decencies of the members of William Sloane Associates.

For all the reading and conferring they did in the process of helping to select the material in the book I am indebted to Alice Breit, Erminie Kahn, Randall Jarrell, Robert E. Garis, Wilton A. Hardy, and Charles B. Farrell. And to Roger Dakin for all the comments and suggestions that I asked him for. Mr. Garis helped me to check and revise the Index, but is not responsible for any surviving errors or inadequacies.

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October 9, 1929

"We Germans," said the widow of a well-known music historian proudly, "do not need Debussy; we have our Schubert and Beethoven"; or—to bring the argument up to date—Reger, Mahler, and Pfitzner, who also make Debussy superfluous. And this because, in the words of a Viennese musician, "*We* do not merely listen to the sounds and effects; we ask how do the chords move, what are the rhythms, how goes the counterpoint." For the German, that is, music is sweaty: the technical complexities, however sterile, of Reger, or the technical virtuosity, however impotent, of the Strauss of today. The German does not observe as a critic what Reger does not observe as a composer—"the difference," as Tovey has put it, "between analytical theory and the practical conditions of creative work"; he is a pedant who has yet to learn that one does better merely to listen to the effects than merely to ask how goes the counterpoint. But this pedantry makes him, in his own eyes, the most understanding of listeners. He reasons also that music is a racial product, therefore that German music can be understood only by Germans as French music can be understood only by Frenchmen. Nor can the traditions of its performance be acquired by musicians of other races, so that only in Germany does it sound as it should.

Now the Viennese simply carries this nonsense a step further: the music, the traditions, are not German but Viennese; hence even Furtwängler fails with Bruckner, and the Adolf Busch Quartet with Schubert; good German singers develop into great German singers when they come to the Vienna Opera; Furtwängler achieves his most successful performances with the

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Vienna, not with the Berlin Philharmonic; this orchestra has not the tone even of the Vienna Symphony and gets only a pat on the head for its discipline (a quality which the Viennese affects to despise as Prussian and as one which robs the *interpretation* of plasticity). Hence, also, when the Viennese madly applauds a third-rate singer at the Opera or the dry, scratchy, pedantic Rosé Quartet, it may be that sheer love of music makes him uncritical, or that he is demonstrating how very critical he is, and that music has mysteries which are revealed only to Viennese performers and listeners—to whom one must add Viennese critics, whose ability to make small things appear big and simple things complicated is at times stupefying.

The Viennese, then, will not understand that what he had to teach has been learned; he will have it that he is still holding the torch, that the war which impoverished and humiliated him could not take away supremacy in the things that matter most—culture, manners, beauty and charm of women. His attitude is that of the impoverished aristocrat toward the nouveau riche whom he formerly looked down upon, particularly toward the German, to whom he always felt superior and who has come out of the war better off than he. Today the Viennese finds it easier to be just to the Milan Scala company than to the Berlin Philharmonic.

The prevailing notion of America is that it has the money to command talent, but is not able really to appreciate it. A few Viennese, very conscious of their breadth of mind, concede that high standards and genuine understanding exist in America; but they expect Americans to concede that Viennese standards and understanding are superior to all. This an American who has come to Vienna to study will naturally do; and this done, his discernment is praised and he is flattered out of his senses. As a result, a more critical attitude encounters first amazement and then anger. When an American—in what he is reminded is the best musical society in Vienna—criticizes Furtwängler's performances he is asked literally what he knows about it. When he characterizes the Viennese attitude toward the music Vienna

does not hear or the American orchestras it has not heard as arrogant, he is told that as a visitor he is arrogant in presuming to judge Vienna's music or its Philharmonic even after hearing them, and that he will learn better when he has lived in the city long enough. As voices grow louder the quiet confident arrogance of the beginning becomes angry and personally offensive: what he considered the finest performances at the Opera, those of Mozart and *Tristan* under Strauss, are characterized as "the worst, of course"; he is told the place for his taste is Berlin; he is asked to say on his honor whether he came to Vienna prejudiced; his word to the contrary is doubted at first; meanwhile the actual arguments are an affront to his intelligence. Not that he is argued with; he is simply told: for one thing that on racial grounds French music must be foreign to the Viennese—which is bad anthropology; and that therefore only the Americans, with no music of their own, can be musical internationalists—which is bad logic. Also, that he may not judge Reger without having studied the scores a few years—which is silly enough; but when he points out that he had not found this necessary for Beethoven, he is told that in his own lifetime Beethoven almost starved because his music was not understood—which is bad history. He is told not only nonsense, but contradictory nonsense, what with the necessity of being annihilated at every point: when he says that the Viennese get an inadequate idea of Debussy or Bloch from the performances they hear he is told that performance cannot obscure the quality of music; when he points out that America, on the contrary, has got its idea of Bruckner from Furtwängler, among others, he is told one does not hear the authentic Bruckner from Furtwängler.

Curiously enough, when the battle is over it appears that Furtwängler, since his American visits, has *not* been quite the same; that the Vienna Philharmonic *is* overworked; and so on. These, apparently, are things which the Viennese may admit among themselves, but which an American should not notice and has no right to speak of.

March 18, April 8, 1939

There were vacant seats at Schnabel's recital, at which he played Schubert's posthumous Sonata in C minor, Weber's Sonata in A flat, and Beethoven's *Hammerklavier*. But in the program one read that only standing-room was left for Josef Hofmann's recital, at which he would—the advertisement promised—play Beethoven's *Moonlight* Sonata and Liszt's *Liebestraum*. From his programs of the past twenty-five years I predict that he will also play small pieces by Chopin, including the *Minute Waltz*, Liadov's *Music-Box*, Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*, Rubinstein's *Melody in F*, Moszkowski's *Juggleress*, and Rachmaninov's most famous Prelude, or their equivalents. From these you might suspect that Hofmann was a different sort of pianist from Schnabel—with different qualities that caused him to hold a different view of his function as a public performer, to play different music, to play this music in a different way. And you would be right: Hofmann—about whom there has been such an outpouring of effulgent words in the press recently—presents one of the worst examples of the virtuoso career.

The virtuoso pianist presents himself to his audience for the same purpose as the acrobat—to show all the things he can do with his instrument and with the music; and he regards the instrument and music in the way the acrobat regards his trapeze—as things to be used for his purpose. In his youth he learned his pianistic and musical tricks in a certain number of works; and since then he has used the same works to show off his pianistic and musical tricks. Thus, in the twenty-five years that I have heard Hofmann he has gone on recombining into programs of one pattern the limited group of works that he learned fairly early—a group that has included a large quantity of trashy salon and display pieces but not one sonata by Mozart or Schubert (he has played Liszt's Concerto in E flat and both concertos of Rubinstein, but not one by Mozart). And in his playing of these works there have been such things as the left-hand octaves crashed out sensationally to achieve nothing more

than left-hand octaves crashed out sensationally; the series of notes extracted from within accompaniment chords and brought out as a counter-melody which the composer never dreamed of; the Brahms variation or the exposition of a Chopin sonata played with one set of crescendos, decrescendos, and rubatos the first time and another set the second time—each set for no other apparent reason than to show he could think up crescendos, decrescendos, and rubatos different from the composer's, and the two sets for no other apparent reason than to show he could think up two sets different from the composer's—things which have added up on occasion to some of the worst performances of music I have ever heard.

Most recitals are given by other Hofmanns big and small; and concert-giving as practiced by the virtuoso pianists, violinists, and conductors deprives us of the experience of a great deal of valuable music which they don't get around to performing. Our virtuoso pianist, that is, has no interest in music to work against the inertia, the laziness, and the competitive spirit which lead him to improve his performance of the Beethoven sonata that he already knows and that his competitors play, rather than to learn another sonata. And this is true of the virtuoso conductor. Examine Koussevitzky's programs, and you will find that his enterprise shows itself almost entirely in the playing of contemporary works. In the established repertory, preferring to devote rehearsal time to such famous and triumphant matters as his performances of Prokofiev's *Classical* Symphony and Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloë* Suite, he repeats an old Haydn symphony instead of preparing a new one, and ends by going over the same limited ground year after year—much the same limited ground as all conductors go over year after year.

To those of us who depend on performance for our knowledge of music the result is a loss of a number of great works. Haydn's Symphony No. 104, which Tovey considers one of his greatest instrumental works, I heard for the first time a year ago; and several others of the London symphonies I have never

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heard at all; nor have I ever heard performances of a number of Haydn's clavier sonatas that are superb pieces of music. I began to attend concerts in 1914, but didn't hear Mozart's Piano Concerto K.467 until 1934, his K.595 until 1936, his K.491 and K.271 until 1937; Webster Aitken's recent performance of K.450 with the National Orchestral Association was the first I had heard since 1922; and I have yet to hear a performance of K.453.

Hence the value of the series of concerts devoted to intensive exploration of certain sections of the literature: the series in which Schnabel played all of Beethoven's piano sonatas, the one in which Webster Aitken played the piano sonatas of Schubert, the two in which the Budapest Quartet played all of Beethoven's quartets and the major quartets of Mozart. But the series of the New Friends of Music have suffered from the lack of the judgment that could distinguish an unfamiliar masterpiece like Schubert's Trio Opus 100 from a work like his early String Trio that deserved its obscurity.

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History is a legitimate study, but Mozart did not write his G minor Symphony to provide a lesson in history. He intended it as a work of art to be experienced; and its value is not in what it can teach—not in any facts about it, about its composer, about his period—but in the experience which it affords as a work of art. I say this for the benefit of the people—some of whom hold forth in Music X Tuesday and Thursday at ten—to whom Mozart's G minor is anything and everything but something to experience. These people may consider the other things they are concerned with necessary for the experience; but I contend that the symphony can exert all its power as art on someone who knows nothing about its composer and period; just as someone—in Music X Tuesday and Thursday at ten—can know everything about the work, its composer, its period, without knowing anything of its effect as art.

Moreover, to know the relation of Mozart's style to the style of an eighteenth-century rococo interior is to know only what Mozart had in common with a hundred mediocre contemporaries, not what is uniquely his. A hundred men used the same resources of musical language, style, and form as he, were subjected to the same influences of events and ideas, but did not produce the same music. Even the grace, elegance, and refinement of the period are, in the G minor Symphony, distinctive; even the musical language, style, and forms of the period are converted into a medium of expression that is Mozart's and no one else's; and when we consider what is expressed in the symphony, the feeling that is crystallized in the delicate structure, we are faced with something that is unique not only in his period but in all periods, that cannot be accounted for by anything or anybody around him, that originated in an inner chemistry of his particular qualities of mind, emotion, and spirit.

Of these qualities we get a precise and full communication in the music, and I would say only in the music. The letters¹ bring us as close to Mozart as we can get—if, after hearing the G minor Symphony, we are interested in the source of what we have experienced. And by the evidence of the letters the composer of this work was a person of rich and engaging humanity; by the evidence of some that are now published for the first time, or for the first time in unexpurgated form, this humanity was startlingly complete. But by the evidence of the G minor Symphony there were deep-lying emotional and spiritual resources on which only the artist drew, which achieved formulated expression only in the patterns of sound—resources which, by the evidence of some of the early compositions, were already in existence, miraculously, for the boy to draw on almost as soon as he put pen to paper.

From the Mozart correspondence we get an authentic picture of the man, his career, the conditions under which he functioned as an artist; and in this as in other instances the process of learning truth is at the same time one of discovering error. There is, for example, the common belief that Mozart's music, like that

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of other great composers in the past, and like the work of every great artist, was not rightly understood and valued by those who heard it in his lifetime. This is the contention of composers of today, who explain in this way the indifference or dislike which their own music encounters; and it is an inference drawn from the fact that Mozart died of privation at thirty-five. The fact is indisputable; the inference is disputed by Mozart himself. In 1782 he reports to his father that *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is "making such a sensation in Vienna that people refuse to hear anything else, so that the theater is always packed"; in 1783 the opera is given in Prague, Mannheim, Frankfurt, Bonn, and Leipzig; in 1785 it is so popular that Schott publishes an unauthorized clavier arrangement in Mainz before Mozart can publish his own in Vienna. In the same year Leopold Mozart reports to his daughter someone's statement that in publishers' announcements he had seen nothing but Mozart's name, and that the Berlin announcement of the six quartets dedicated to Haydn had stated: "It is quite unnecessary to recommend these quartets to the public. Suffice it to say that they are the work of Herr Mozart." From Leopold we learn also of the success of Mozart's subscription concerts in Vienna in 1785; Mozart himself, in 1787, describes his success in Prague, where "nothing is talked about but—*Figaro*; nothing played, blown, sung, whistled but—*Figaro*; no opera attended but—*Figaro* and forever *Figaro*." In 1791, a few months before his death, he writes to his wife about the packed theaters and "the usual applause and repetition of numbers" at performances of *The Magic Flute*. Never does he have occasion to complain of a disappointing response to one of his works (the hisses of the cabal cannot prevent the shouts of "bravo"); but he does have occasion to complain of a disappointing financial return; and there we have a reason for his death from privation at thirty-five.

The musician of this period held a post in the court or household of a king or prelate or noble; or he earned gifts of money by playing his works at such a court or household and present-

ing copies to such a person; or he gave concerts and had his music engraved for subscribers; or he wrote works that were ordered by a theater manager or a private patron of music. All of these things Mozart did, and all without financial success.

Haydn spent thirty years in the Esterhazy household, where he found financial security, appreciation of his talent, and favorable conditions for its development; Mozart was less fortunate. Concerning his first employer, the Archbishop Hieronymus Colloredo of Salzburg, Leopold Mozart writes in 1777 to Padre Martini that "for the last five years my son has been serving our Prince for a miserable pittance," and that this Prince "was not ashamed to declare that my son knew nothing and that he ought to betake himself to some conservatorio of music at Naples and study music. And why? Simply in order to make it quite clear that a young man in a subordinate position should not be so foolish as to feel convinced that he deserved better pay and more recognition." It was this that compelled Mozart, at twenty-one, to seek employment in Munich, Augsburg, Mannheim, and Paris; his failure to find it compelled him to return to the Archbishop, until further mistreatment ended in the final break in 1781. And concerning Mozart's only other post, that of chamber composer to the Emperor, which he held from 1787 to his death in 1791, Miss Anderson's valuable notes inform us that he received 800 gulden a year, as against the 2,000 paid to his predecessor Gluck and the almost twice 800 paid to his successor Kozeluch.

From another of Miss Anderson's notes we learn that Mozart received only fifty ducats for *The Abduction from the Seraglio* instead of the usual hundred; and I have mentioned that Schott published an unauthorized clavier arrangement before Mozart could publish his own—which deprived him of this part of the financial benefit from the success of the opera. In Mannheim, where he had played for the Elector, his present "was just as I expected. No money, but a fine gold watch." In Paris he gave twenty-four lessons to the daughter of the Duc de Guines and was offered payment for only twelve. In 1789 he writes his wife

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from Leipzig: "From the point of view of applause and glory this concert was absolutely magnificent, but the profits were wretchedly meager"; from Berlin: "The Queen wants to hear me play on Tuesday, but I shan't make much money." In 1790 his need of cash is such that "I have now been obliged to give away my quartets (those very difficult works) [K.575, 589, 590] for a mere song." And in the hope that the festivities in connection with the coronation of Leopold II will enable him to earn some of the money he so desperately needs, he makes his last journey to Frankfurt, where, he writes to his wife, "I am both known and respected" and "already I am being invited everywhere," but has to report in the end that his concert "was a splendid success from the point of view of honor and glory, but a failure as far as money was concerned. Unfortunately some Prince was giving a big *déjeuner* and the Hessian troops were holding a grand maneuver. But in any case some obstacle has arisen on every day during my stay here."

Composers of today who find it advantageous to argue that artists have always been in advance of their time, find it advantageous a moment later to argue that a composer to write well must write a great deal, and that if the twentieth-century composer does not produce as good music as the eighteenth it is because he hasn't the benefit of the eighteenth century's system of patronage, which provided the occasions and rewards for the exercise of talent that is necessary for its development and fruition. One moment, then, Mozart wrote such great music that his own age would have none of it; the next moment he achieved this greatness through being one of a centuryful of busily and profitably and successfully employed composers. As a matter of fact it is not Mozart that our composers have in mind the second moment; it is Haydn. But a hundred other musicians exercised their talents in noble households and did not produce music of the stature of Haydn's; and Mozart produced the greatest music of all without the favorable conditions that Haydn had at Esterhaz. Moreover, the disappearance of the eighteenth-century system of patronage did not mean the end

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of employment for the composer—for the mediocrity, that is, as well as for the genius; but it was without such employment that Schubert exercised his talent and produced the greatest music after Beethoven's. And it is not for lack of occasions to exercise their talents—occasions provided by Guggenheim fellowships, by commissions of orchestras and other such organizations, by prize competitions, and recently by government employment—that our composers are not producing music comparable with the great music of the past; it is for lack of what it takes in musical and personal resources to produce such music.

June 3, 1939

A jazz improvisation by Beiderbecke, like a symphony of Mozart, was intended only to be heard and enjoyed, not to be explained and argued about; and like the symphony it can exert all its power as music on someone who knows nothing beyond the actual phrases from Beiderbecke's cornet. But having experienced these phrases a person may be interested in knowing something about the art of which they are an example; and such a person will do well to read Wilder Hobson's *American Jazz Music*.²⁴

From Hobson he will learn at the very beginning that "most of the so-called jazz or swing heard on the radio is what the players themselves call commercial music, dance arrangements of popular tunes. . . . Some of this music, whatever its aesthetic value, is very ingenious and brilliantly played, and all of it is one way of making a living. . . . But this book is about something else again: a natural musical language which American musicians, Negroes and whites, have been speaking now for more than a quarter-century, which they play for their own pleasure. All the commercial forms borrow from it to some extent; it is sometimes mixed with the commercial; the same men often play both commercially and naturally. But the words 'jazz' and 'swing' are ambiguously applied to all the music, and a large part of the writing, comment, and publicity about

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jazz or swing has been about the commercial forms." The playing of men like Stacy, Kyle, Clayton, to which I have directed attention in this column, is the natural product; the performances of the Goodman and other much-publicized "swing" bands are mixtures of natural with commercial—and I should say little natural with a lot of commercial.

In subsequent chapters Hobson discusses the origins of the jazz language, its characteristics of tone, rhythm, melody, and harmony, its use by the jazz musicians. He does this with warmth and color—but also with essential penetration and sanity—that make the art and its practitioners come alive in a superb way. And as he goes along he refers to thirty records which get a concentrated chapter at the end.

The distinctive characteristic of the jazz language he finds in the tension- and momentum-producing suspended rhythms created by syncopations around the regular beats—syncopations themselves produced on the one hand by percussive accents of piano, drums, guitar, and on the other hand by the subtler melodic stresses of trumpet, trombone, clarinet, saxophone. And the player for whom this is a natural language is one who has a feeling for these suspended rhythms, in whose playing they are "a fluent principle"—and this not only when he is improvising but when he is playing from written notes, which are subjected to a subtle alteration analogous to the "translation" of written note values that a Beethoven sonata undergoes in performance "according to traditions for that particular kind of music and the instincts of the performer." Jazz, then, for Hobson, is the improvisatory invention which naturally lends itself to the nuances of rhythm that are too subtle for notation; but it is also music that is written with, and intended to be played or "translated" with, a feeling for these unscorable nuances.

To this I would add an important qualification: scored jazz does not equal, in quality of musical invention, jazz improvisation. As some people do with Bach, so Hobson fails with jazz to distinguish sufficiently between the mere use of the language and important use of it. When they hear the Bach formulas

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they are hearing Bach; when he hears the tension- and momentum-producing suspended rhythms he is hearing jazz. They are excited whether the formulas are used with inspiration or without; he is excited whether the suspended rhythms occur in an imaginative improvisation by Buck Clayton or in an externally brilliant performance of an intrinsically less valuable scored passage by the entire Basie orchestra, whether they occur in a richly inventive Teddy Wilson solo of 1935 or in a sterile one of 1938. This is apparent in the selection of the thirty records, and should be kept in mind by anyone who uses the book as an introduction to the music and finds himself bored by some of the performances Hobson is enthusiastic about.

July 8, 1939

The people who organized the American Lyric Theater might have said: We will set up a theater in which we will use American singers, a stage designer like Robert Edmond Jones, a conductor like Fritz Reiner, to produce operas in a way in which they are not produced by the Metropolitan; a theater in which we will give works the Metropolitan does not give, and those that are better given in a smaller auditorium than the Metropolitan's; a theater available on the one hand to an American composer who may write an opera worth staging; a theater available on the other hand to the public that is interested in opera but unable to afford the Metropolitan's prices. And deferring to the realities of the situation—what American composers can offer, and what American audiences will pay even low prices to hear—they might have begun with *The Marriage of Figaro*, which Reiner and Graf produced so successfully with young American singers in Philadelphia a few years ago, or with *Carmen*. In this way they would have created a theater and a repertory that might have attracted an audience.

What they actually said and did was very different. The kind of thinking that went into the project is exemplified by two consecutive paragraphs of the prospectus, the first of which be-

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gins with the statement, "Interest in music in the United States has grown amazingly in the past twenty years," followed by illustrative figures, and the second of which begins with the statement, "One of the strongest forces in building up this wave of interest in contemporary music is the sixteen-year-old League of Composers." The first statement is fact; the insertion of "contemporary" in the second is an example of how fact is falsified by verbal manipulation; and a good deal of the time the manipulation is of terms that are not even rooted in fact to begin with.

In every country, according to the thinkers of the American Lyric Theater, there lies between popular musical comedy and grand opera the field of lyric drama. This differs from grand opera in being intimate, in being native—that is, "rooted in folk material, and providing the necessary opportunities for native librettists, composers, singers, and artists"; it is therefore "the one manifestation of musical art that has had, in all countries, the most popular appeal," and the source of "the great music of every nation" and of grand opera in particular. And our own country, too, has its composers and librettists bursting with talent which, as the talent of Americans, is specifically adapted to the creation of an American lyric drama "out of indigenous material"—a lyric drama which will be "a natural not an imported product, intimate in character," and appealing to Americans because it "will speak to the people in their own language on familiar subjects." The one thing that has prevented the creation of such a drama here has been the lack of a producing theater for which the talent might work—"the large dimensions of the [Metropolitan] Opera House being more suited for the standard grand operas of a foreign pattern"; and the American Lyric Theater is to fill this one need.

But if one looks at the other countries one finds that the more intimate operas are things like Mozart's *Seraglio* and *Figaro*, Verdi's *Falstaff*, Debussy's *Pelléas*, which are not rooted in the folk material, either dramatic or musical, of the composers' countries; one finds that not only these but works like *Der Frei-*

schütz and *The Bartered Bride*, which are rooted in folk material, are part of the repertoires of the great opera houses; and if one turns back to this country one finds that these works have been given at the Metropolitan, and that the American public has not found them any more difficult of access than it has foreign painting, literature, drama, or films, and has preferred them to native products like *The Man Without a Country*.

The organizers of the American Lyric Theater also produced two American operas "illustrative of these purposes and of the organization's high artistic standards"—and illustrative, presumably, of the hitherto unused riches of native talent. And if one considers on what they chose to lavish the skill of a Jones and a Reiner, the expense of scenery, costumes, singers, chorus, an orchestra of fifty-two and a stage-crew of twenty-five at union rates—if, that is, one considers *Susanna*, *Don't You Cry* with its "symphonic" mistreatment of Stephen Foster's music in every possible European style that does not fit, and the feeble score for *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, one must conclude that these people not only were ignorant and muddled but did not have the minimum of artistic brains and taste that could recognize talent and lack of talent when they encountered them.

But it turns out that *Susanna* was produced because \$50,000 came to the American Lyric Theater from someone who wanted it produced; and events proved in this instance that a theater with neither artistic brains nor integrity behind it could not win an audience.

August 26, 1939

There was, many years ago, a golden age of singing. And there was, only quite recently, what might be called a golden age of orchestral performance: those ten years or so when simultaneously the New York Philharmonic was playing under Toscanini, the Boston Symphony under Koussevitzky, the Philadelphia under Stokowski, each orchestra exceptional in quality of personnel, each highly sensitized to the direction of a conductor

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exceptional in specific talents for the purpose—the ear for orchestral precision and sonority, the technique and personal force with which to achieve them; each orchestra, then, an instrument with which its conductor produced, in accordance with his individual taste, the distinctive radiance and transparency and sharpness of definition of the New York Philharmonic under Toscanini, the equally distinctive lush sumptuousness and splendor of the Philadelphia under Stokowski, the no less distinctive glow and subtlety and refinement of the Boston Symphony under Koussevitzky—sonorities which were to the sounds of these or any other orchestras under other conductors as the voice of Caruso to the voices of other tenors.

Of the three combinations only that of Koussevitzky with the Boston Symphony is still to be heard regularly, functioning with unimpaired brilliance, and with certain of its most famous achievements more miraculous and breath-taking than ever. Only in his programs has Koussevitzky shown lessened vigor, or perhaps merely the normal tendency of the virtuoso to give an ever higher polish to the works he is most successful with instead of learning something unfamiliar. I judge from the programs in New York, and also from those of the summer festivals, which merely transfer to a shed in the Berkshires the most overplayed works of the orchestra's winter repertory in Symphony Hall. Even Bach's B minor Mass, announced for next summer, is standard fare; whereas something out of the ordinary for a festival would be a work like Berlioz's *Childhood of Christ*.

Stokowski returned to the Philadelphia Orchestra last season for a mere fortnight in Philadelphia, a single concert in New York, and revealed again his phenomenal talent for conducting—his ability to produce dazzling feats of virtuosity and fabulously beautiful sounds with an orchestra; but also revealed again that what interested him most in conducting was to use the orchestra and music to produce feats of virtuosity and beautiful sounds. They may work out occasionally into something as

fine as his performance of the Haydn-Brahms Variations in New York; but more often the result is a performance like the one of Bach's D minor Toccata and Fugue for organ, which reduced the work to a succession of effects for the moment. One of the effects was new: a phrase of the Toccata would begin while the preceding phrase was still fading out. It was, apparently, to think out this that Stokowski had devoted the other fifty weeks of the year; and it was for this that Bach had had to wait 200 years, to achieve the full realization of his purpose at last.

As for Toscanini, he conducts the new N.B.C. Symphony which, heard last winter in Newark's Mosque Theater, revealed an improvement in tone and responsiveness that made it a superb instrument in his hands, though still not what the New York Philharmonic had been. His work with his new orchestra is heard in its full beauty only by those who are able to get into the few public concerts. The people who are invited to the broadcasts in N.B.C.'s Studio 8H hear performances deprived of their tonal richness by the studio's acoustic conditions. This N.B.C. admits: the studio, it says, is meant for broadcasting; and it is true that what goes out through the microphones is far better than what can be heard in the studio. But N.B.C. means also that the studio is well adapted to broadcasting; and this is not true. What else can N.B.C. say? A corporation has its pride, like any of us; it has its "face," like the Japanese. Can N.B.C. admit that a studio which is the product of R.C.A.'s financial and engineering resources is not perfection; can it admit that Carnegie Hall, from which the New York Philharmonic is broadcast by Columbia, would be better for the N.B.C. Symphony; can it do anything but stubbornly keep the orchestra in Studio 8H at no matter what cost to Toscanini's broadcasts? True, having insisted after the first season that the studio was perfect, N.B.C. announced before the second season that it had been perfected; and true, it was improved. But when Alfred Wallenstein said in an interview that orchestral performances, including Toscanini's, were not being reproduced perfectly by radio because, in the first place, no substitute had been found for

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the wood and plaster of Carnegie Hall, and the millions spent on studio walls, floors, and ceilings had therefore not been able to produce anything to equal Carnegie Hall's acoustic excellence, he said what was plain to hear.

Toscanini's performance, then, goes out on the air with a loss due to the acoustics of the studio. It goes out, as Mr. Wallenstein pointed out, with a further loss due to the fact that the stations do not broadcast up to the 12,000 cycles or so which the ear can hear in the living performance; and a loss due to the fact that the lines which connect the stations in a network cannot carry the full volume range of the living performance—a loss, therefore, through monitoring which cuts down the fortissimo of the living performance and steps up the pianissimo, and in this way changes also the plastic proportions of the tonal continuum that are so remarkable in a Toscanini performance. This monitoring, also denied by N.B.C. the first season, was done more skilfully the second; but it was still plain to hear. And finally the performance reaches the ears of the millions outside with a loss due to the deficiencies of most of the radios in American homes. In the end Toscanini conducts but is not heard.

There were, last season, interesting changes in his work that I may discuss later; there were again his appalling choices of music; and there were this time Mr. Chotzinoff's talks, which might have been called *Great Composers as Seen Through the Keyhole*—concerned with the fact that Liszt took a trip to Italy "with the Countess dee Agoult," and Wagner went off with Cosima, and all the rest of what Mr. Chotzinoff thought important about these men and their music.

October 7, 1939

The unwritten code of American music critics who are gentlemen is that one mentions a fellow-critic only to pay him a compliment or does not mention him at all, and in this way assures oneself of the same consideration. The English tradition is that one corrects a fellow-critic's error and takes the consequences.

This makes for less comfortable critics, but for better criticism, and in this way for more enlightened readers.

A critic's verdict on this or that performance is negligible; what cannot be ignored is the general ideas on violin-playing or conducting or operatic performance that he puts into the heads of his readers in the process of giving his verdict on Heifetz or Barbirolli or the Metropolitan *Orfeo*. For these ideas pile up to become the readers' understanding of music, the basis of their own judgments and attitudes; and it is therefore in the power of the critic to educate his readers or to corrupt them. Thus, when Deems Taylor, to build up Barbirolli for the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Society and Columbia Broadcasting System, said: "The extraordinary thing about Mr. Barbirolli's tenure of office so far is that people have begun to realize that the Philharmonic is a great orchestra. They don't talk so much about the conductor, and I think that's the greatest tribute you can pay the conductor of any orchestra," he not only, incidentally, knifed Toscanini but misstated fact, since what people had formerly talked about was Toscanini's ability to reveal the capacities of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and they were talking now about Barbirolli's inability to do so; and he gave the utmost plausibility to an incorrect idea about the relation of a conductor to an orchestra. The blandly treacherous attack on Toscanini provoked some of the New York critics into violating the code and rebuking Mr. Taylor; but more important was the blandly treacherous attack on his hearers' understanding, and the fact that Mr. Taylor's use of this dust-in-the-eyes technique, during the many years that he has written and spoken on music without drawing a murmur from his colleagues, has filled the heads of his readers and listeners with more incorrect facts and ideas than one would have thought it possible for one person to have.

This, it seems to me, is something which a commentator on the musical scene must concern himself with. Not only is criticism itself a part of this scene, but it is a part which in large measure shapes this scene, and which must therefore be watched

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most vigilantly. If our musical life is the worse for a Barbirolli at the head of a New York Philharmonic it is the worse for the criticism which helped to make this possible—not only Gilman's review of Barbirolli's first appearance here, which would have been suitable for the first appearance of Toscanini, Muck, and Mahler combined, but the articles in which Henderson, irritated by the fuss and hysteria about Toscanini, hammered away year after year against prima donna conductors.

That brings us to reasons. A critic may fail through mere inability to hear, judge, think; and that accounts for some very bad criticism. But Henderson knew how great orchestral performance was produced; and if, nevertheless, he wrote those deplorable articles it was because on those occasions the knowledge and taste of a critic were displaced by the emotions of a moralist. I once pointed out here that Shaw was the finest of music critics not only because of the critical resources he brought to the job, but because of the integrity that caused him to use all these resources of knowledge, taste, literary skill, and wit to deal rigorously with his subject as it required to be dealt with; and the bad critic is one who allows himself to be deflected from such rigorous justice. He may do so for the reason that Henderson did. Or he may, in Shaw's words, be "afraid of his friends, of his enemies, of his editor, of his own ignorance" and "hopelessly muzzled by the mere mass of [his] personal acquaintance." Or he may use his subject to show off what he thinks are his knowledge, taste, literary skill, and wit; and whether it is Gilman using it to write belles lettres, or Chotzinoff to pose as the hard-boiled, blasé critic whom nothing can fool and nothing, almost, can impress, his subject suffers.

November 18, December 2, 1939; February 3, 1940

American broadcasting companies are loud about the unequalled benefits which the American radio audience receives from the American system of commercial broadcasting; and their claims may be questioned. N.B.C., for example, has much to say

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about the symphony orchestra it established for broadcasting in 1937, about its engagement of Toscanini, and about these as the "climax to its presentation of the best in music for eleven years" (to quote from the brochure celebrating the occasion). But as far back as 1928 I heard in London the fine symphony orchestra established by the British Broadcasting Corporation with funds it received as license-fees from the owners of radio sets; and this orchestra's concerts and broadcasts each week under conductors who later included Koussevitzky and Toscanini were part of a program which assured the English radio audience an average of two hours of the best music every evening. I was amazed by the quantity of music of all forms, periods, and tendencies with which the B.B.C. was enriching the musical life of England—amazed because I had come from a country where the public was assured it was getting incomparably better programs than the English, but where in fact nothing remotely comparable was being offered. For this was at a time, which continued as late as 1930-31 (the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts began in 1931-32), when the Philadelphia Orchestra might be heard in a few special broadcasts during the season, but N.B.C.'s week-in, week-out offerings were typified by the Saturday night General Electric Hour in which Walter Damrosch conducted programs of things like Delibes's *Sylvia*, Massenet's *Elegy*, Grainger's *Molly on the Shore*, Handel's *Largo*, Rubinstein's *Melody in F*, Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*, with an occasional movement or two from a symphony; when N.B.C. offered no programs of concert caliber at all on week-day nights; and when its total for the week might be two hours.

If, then, N.B.C., out of regard for the commercial value of Toscanini's name, established an orchestra for radio in 1937, it did what the B.B.C., out of regard for music, did ten years earlier. And if American commercial broadcasting gave the American radio audience Toscanini's performances in 1937, it gave this audience Damrosch's before that—Damrosch's name then having been sufficiently celebrated for N.B.C. to acquire as a commercial asset.

DECEMBER 16, 1939

If the B.B.C. put on a series of all the Beethoven quartets out of its feeling of obligation to such music, it would give each quartet the time it required. When N.B.C. puts on such a series out of a desire for the reputation of feeling an obligation to such music, the American system of commercial broadcasting leads it to assign a half-hour for the purpose and, when a work requires three quarters of an hour, to slice out one of the movements.

But the American broadcasting companies' sense of their own virtue would do for an Inquisition burning the right faith into heretics or a Soviet government bombing it into Finnish villagers. Anyone who cannot see in a musical program of N.B.C., Columbia, or Mutual the utmost in devotion to music, in understanding, in wisdom, is—in the eyes of N.B.C., Columbia, or Mutual—a person blinded by his own mean nature. But the people at N.B.C. who fit Beethoven quartets into half-hour periods by slicing out movements are—in the eyes of anyone with real devotion to music and real understanding—barbarians blinded by their arrogance.

December 16, 1939

In one of his finest essays, *Music at Night*, Aldous Huxley²⁵ writes of what a painting, by "the forms and their arrangement . . . the disposition of the lines and planes and masses," will say "to anyone in the least sensitive to the eloquence of pure form." But to someone not in the least sensitive to the eloquence of pure form the painting will say nothing. And such a person, if he lives on the democratic assumption of the complete adequacy of his normal equipment to any subject, is likely to conclude that if the meaning of the painting were only explained to him in the right terms he would understand it, or that there is something to know *about* the painting which, if he were told it, would give him the perception he lacks, or that there is really nothing to perceive and those who claim perception are frauds. Faced by these attitudes one can try to remove

them, or one can exploit them. One can, that is, try to explain to a reader that there is an "eloquence of pure form" to which one person may be sensitive and another not. Or one can entertain him, and let him think that when he is entertained he is understanding the painting (to be amused by biographical details is not to be sensitive to the eloquence of pure form); and one can, in this way, confirm his belief that what there is to be understood he is fully competent to understand and what he does not understand is not there to be understood.

This is the Simon and Schuster method with the arts and sciences, of which the latest example is *Men of Music* by Wallace Brockway and Herbert Weinstock.⁸ The publishers, true enough, offer it to the reader who has "an affection for, though not a technical knowledge of, music," which some readers, no doubt, will have; but there is no doubt also that it will be read by those whom it was planned to attract—readers who think that all they need to increase their slight enjoyment of music is a good dose of "knowledge." Such readers will be attracted to the book by the statement of Clifton Fadiman, breaking his rigorous silence on books about music to say that this one is "for those who know practically nothing of music but are willing to learn"; and by the publishers' statement that the book, which "treats music in the terms of the men who created it . . . will prove immensely valuable to the millions of people who wish to know more about the music they hear each day."

Opening the book the reader encounters first Deems Taylor's introduction—a characteristic Taylor performance. Taylor once wrote of Walter Damrosch: "He never was a Karl Muck, and I don't believe he ever wanted to be one. He seems curiously impatient of ultra-subtle readings of the classics"—by which the difference between Damrosch and Muck was converted into the difference between healthy simplicity and ultra-subtlety, and Damrosch's inadequacy into a defect in Muck. That is the Taylor method, which he uses in the present introduction to convert the types of music that are not discussed in the book into matters that no healthy, normal music lover will bother with. And in

this instance, when Taylor gets his readers to share his ignorance of the nature and significance and value of types of music other than European music of the past three centuries, he encourages the intolerance such readers are likely to feel toward these forms of music and toward people who are not ignorant, and he is therefore guilty of a species of cultural rabble-rousing.

After this introduction the reader comes to the book itself. The authors' intention in describing the lives that are to illuminate the music includes stripping away the romantic glamour and revealing the composers as human beings like the rest of us; their method includes jazzing up the material and tone; and while this sensationalizing and cheapening procedure can entertain readers with a taste for that kind of entertainment it cannot accomplish the proper end of biography. To write, as W. J. Turner⁶³ does, that when Leopold II did not include Mozart in his retinue for the coronation in Frankfurt, Mozart, "in view of his desperate financial plight and the possibility of having a large audience among the visitors to the coronation, pawned his silver plate and ornaments to pay his expenses," is to give a reader a notion of the circumstances of his life and period—the fact that his only hope of the money, the commissions, the post he needed so desperately was to present himself to such audiences—that made him decide he must go to Frankfurt at any cost. To write, as Brockway and Weinstock do, that "Mozart's actions at this point were hysterical. Constanze was ailing and required expensive medical care, he himself had only just recovered from a serious illness, and his poverty was becoming unbearable. Yet he pawned the few valuables he had left and gallivanted off to Frankfurt with the idea of giving concerts while the city was crowded with notables," is to give the reader a false conception of the circumstances, the action, and ultimately the man. Similarly, to write, as Turner does, that a sensitive and imaginative person can understand what the letters to Puchberg must have cost Mozart, is to convey to a reader a notion of what makes these letters so painful to read—the agony of a man of delicacy and pride who has to beg for help; to write,

as Brockway and Weinstock do, that "he now began that series of begging letters to a fellow-Mason which is matched in the annals of music only by the more flagrant specimens from Wagner's pen," is to give a reader a false conception of the letters and so of the man. And countless details of this sort add up to the authors' inadequacy to their objective of illuminating the lives of the men they discuss.

This inadequacy appears also in their discussion of the music: it is understandable that men who miss what is in Mozart's letters should miss the poignancy of the E flat symphony and hear only "a gay, even impudent work, with but few notes of pensiveness." And with the same inadequacy there are the same deflationary intention and the same sensationalizing and cheapening method—which enables them to be airily impressive to their readers, but not to accomplish the proper end of criticism. Their reading of Tovey is evident in the unacknowledged borrowing of words, phrases, ideas—everything, in fact, but Tovey's understanding; as a result their discussion of Schubert's music is a lurid hashing up of all the notions that Tovey cites chapter and verse in the music to disprove, including the usual statements about Schubert as a composer capable of the single lyrical inspiration for a song but unable to cope with the materials and problems of large forms. For example: "But alas! it was again on the rock of development that Schubert foundered. After proving conclusively that he could write page after page of great symphonic music, he seems to have unfocused his attention on the extremely difficult business on hand, and to have lapsed into . . . irrelevant garrulousness. Thus, the C major concludes on a maundering, inconsequential note. . . ." From such statements a reader will not get the understanding of Schubert as a powerful innovator in large forms that one gets from Tovey's monumental demonstration, the understanding even of Schubert's weaknesses that Tovey expresses in the statement that they are relaxations of his powers—to say nothing of Tovey's observations that the first movement of the C major symphony has "more than Schubert's usual concentration," that

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"the development is conspicuously free from redundancy or digression," and that the conclusion of the work "is one of the greatest in all symphonic music."

And finally the book offers material of which a fair sample is the statement that in his piano trios the piano helped Schubert "successfully to overcome miscalculations in design and instrumentation that often baffled him when composing for strings alone." This statement, properly made, sums up detailed knowledge of the works for strings alone and detailed observation of their miscalculations in design; and it can be genuinely understood only by a person who has this detailed knowledge and observation or is willing and able to acquire it. The reader of *Men of Music* is therefore not likely to understand the statement, but this will not keep him from repeating it; and there we have a major purpose of the book. It is, says Mr. Fadiman, "for those who may have heard a good deal of music but are not even quite sure they know what they like"; and it makes it possible for such persons to talk knowingly about Schubert's miscalculations in design without being able to know one if they heard it.

January 13, 1940

This column has its own little "In the Wind" department in which, with some compunctions, I record Vladimir Horowitz's statement to an interviewer that in recent years "the later Beethoven sonatas have drawn me very much, though I would seldom try to play them in public, since the musical thought, partly on account of Beethoven's bad piano writing, remains inaccessible to the majority of listeners." My compunctions are caused by the fact that while the statement is in all ways ridiculous the man who made it is not: describing the development of his taste he confessed it had taken him a long time to get from Grieg, who had captivated him at the start, to Beethoven, and added: "But one must develop in one's own way, without apolo-

gies and certainly without the attempt at taking an artificial position, and claiming to admire what one does not." This honesty increases one's respect for Horowitz as a man, but it does not lessen one's concern over his effect as a concert pianist. All over the country, that is, are people whose only contact with music for the piano is made at recitals which are given almost entirely by pianists like Horowitz, functioning on a high level of virtuosity and a considerably lower level of musical understanding and taste; and for these people the greatest works of Beethoven, Schubert, Mozart, Haydn, and Bach might as well not have been written. And this is not to consider what idea they would get of the last sonatas of Beethoven from performances by someone with Horowitz's idea of them.

With no compunctions I report the way some of the German conductors you never heard of, who are now in this country, listen to a Toscanini broadcast, beating time and exclaiming now "So he does it!" and now "*This* tempo he takes here?" and once in a great while "*That* was good"—the verdict in the end being that Toscanini can do justice to Rossini and Verdi but not to German music, and above all not to Beethoven (for an eminent German musicologist who heard the broadcasts of the Seventh and Ninth only the Trio of the Scherzo of the Ninth was rightly understood by Toscanini). Inevitably these men appeal to an American to explain attitudes of the American public which they can account for only by dark conspiracies of American critics: the inflation into a twentieth-century Beethoven of a composer, Sibelius, in whose symphonies they cannot hear one phrase worthy of being called a theme; and the lack of appreciation of the genius of Bruckner. Evidently the Teutonic mind that is impressed by mere aspiration to profundity when this is expressed in sufficiently bulky and ponderous terms is a mind incapable of perceiving the modest pleasures—of thematic material and formal construction—which Sibelius does offer; and it is a mind that will hear injustice to Beethoven in Toscanini's performances.

January 20, 1940

Record companies, an executive remarked to me recently, are in business not to produce art but to make money; and in the record business, as in the toothpaste business, money is made not on the quality of a product but on its name. I don't mean that the quality is necessarily poor: a celebrated artist is sometimes celebrated because he is a great artist. But in its Metropolitan *Otello* set, certainly, Victor is selling an undistinguished product on the strength of a distinguished name—which is exactly what the Metropolitan itself is doing. In the performance of *Otello* that I attended, Tibbett—whose boyish face peeping out at one through make-up and false whiskers, and whose gestures right out of dramatic school have provided a good share of the things that have made me laugh at the Metropolitan—contributed a comically villainous Iago that I might have ascribed to the stage director's malice if I had not known it was to be ascribed to his helplessness. Most revealing was what happened in the very first scene, in which Tibbett, with nothing to sing or do, should have kept himself rigorously within the stage picture contrived by the director, but in which instead he destroyed illusion by presenting the distracting figure of an important star waiting for his part to begin, bored meanwhile by the action around him, and drawing attention away from it, now by fussing with his cloak, his sword, his stance, now by conversing with another singer, now by turning to look the audience over—his power to destroy the scene's effect in this way evidently greater than the director's power to stop him.

Ah, yes, the star system, you will say. Yes and no. It depends on what is done with the stars, on whether they are used for the operas, or the operas for them—whether, that is, a manager decides to produce *Otello*, assigns roles in the production to his outstanding singers, and gives to conductor and stage director the authority to make the best use of the singers' capacities and limitations; or whether, casting about for roles in which to

exploit a singer's box-office appeal, the manager lets a Tibbett have his fling at Iago.

On the other hand consider the revival of *Orfeo* last year. The prestige of the Metropolitan's name is based on historic performances in which the great stars of the past were subjected to the authority of great conductors—the 1909 performances of *Orfeo*, for example, in which Homer, Gluck, and Gadsby sang under Toscanini. This prestige was attached last year to a production that had Thorborg's superb performance as Orfeo, but that suffered from scandalously inferior singers in the other roles, and from Bodanzky's heavy-handed conducting. There may not be as great singers today as in 1909, or as many of them; but I am not sure the Metropolitan has all it could have; and I know that from those it had last year it could have put together a more respectable cast for *Orfeo*. Nor are there Toscaninis to be picked from trees; but *Orfeo* might have been conducted by Reiner, who has been drifting around doing odd jobs like the brilliant Philadelphia Orchestra *Falstaff* and *Figaro* and *Meistersinger* while Bodanzky was producing those driven, tight performances at the Metropolitan, and who will go on conducting an orchestra in Pittsburgh while the entire German repertory at the Metropolitan is handled by a young conductor * who has yet to acquire depth and breadth as a musician.

But as a matter of fact the Metropolitan has had one of the greatest singers of all time, Kirsten Flagstad, whose voice today shows the effect of its misuse through managers' conscienceless greed and her own recklessness—five years not only of incessant Brünnhildes and Sieglindes and Isoldes but of Brünnhildes, Sieglindes, and Isoldes four times in seven days, three times in three consecutive days—whereas Caruso never sang more than twice a week. The loveliness, the incredible freshness of the voice when it was first heard here were due to the fact that it had never been taxed in this way—for one thing that Flagstad had sung very little Wagner and a great deal of Italian opera.

* Erich Leinsdorf.

JANUARY 27, 1940

And with its performances of Verdi positively disreputable and Mozart out of the repertory altogether for lack of singers, the Metropolitan, looking about desperately for new roles for Flagstad, could think of nothing better to do than to put on *The Flying Dutchman* so that she could sing Senta. However, even that is better than putting on *Louise* for Grace Moore.

January 27, 1940

On opera as on other musical subjects discussion continues to be carried on in the terms of certain ideas no matter how many times these ideas are shown to have no basis in fact. In the case of opera one of the ideas is concerned with the effect of government subsidy: repeatedly one encounters the statement that the greatness of the Vienna Opera, among others, was one that could be achieved only by a subsidized company which was able to ignore the box office, and that the defects of the Metropolitan's repertory and productions during the Gatti regime, on the other hand, were due to the fact that it had to pay its own way—which it did by giving popular operas, by giving more performances than could be kept up to a high standard, by merely throwing together, under these mass-production conditions, performances with a few popular stars.

This statement is based on a wrong notion of the purpose and the effect of the Vienna Opera's subsidy. Whether it came out of the emperor's pocket or out of the republic's treasury, its purpose was not to make the management indifferent to what happened at the box office, but to cover the deficit that was inevitable under prices scaled to make the performances accessible to persons of small incomes. At that point the difference between Vienna and New York ends; from that point on they are alike: like the Metropolitan directors the Austrian emperor or government expected seats to be sold and performances to be given that would cause the seats to be bought.

But the similarity goes farther. You may have read the New York *Times* correspondent's reports of the defects in the Vienna

Opera's repertory and productions during the last years of the Austrian republic—among other things the performances thrown together with a few popular stars. From my own seven months' experience in Vienna in the winter of 1928-29 I can testify that these reports were correct—that many of the performances were as poor as those that were to be heard at that time at the Metropolitan. And it may seem at first that they were poor for the same reason—that the Vienna company, too, had to attract audiences with popular stars in popular operas, and that it operated under even worse mass-production conditions, since it had to give performances seven days a week not for twenty-four weeks but for ten months of the year, and to work during the remaining two months at the Salzburg Festival.

But the fact is that under the same working conditions the Vienna company had a period of extraordinary brilliance early in the century—the period on which its fame and the current views about subsidized opera rest. And if under the same conditions the results were different—if repertory, singing, staging, and all the rest added up to productions that are still talked about today—the reason was solely in the fact that the artistic director of the company was Gustav Mahler, with all this meant in taste and personal force. The decline to the 1928-29 level began with Mahler's departure; but even in 1928-29 I heard several performances of memorable quality in Vienna—those conducted by Richard Strauss. Mahler went to the Metropolitan; and the fact is that there were great productions there also in the early years of the Gatti regime—those which represented the taste and authority of Mahler and Toscanini; that it was the absence of such taste and authority that brought the Metropolitan to the low level of the later years; that only with their return will the productions acquire distinction once more. As yet they have not returned; and the situation is like the one in a European Foreign Office, where the ministers who come and go count for less than the permanent undersecretary who remains: Mr. Johnson has been able to renovate the orchestra and restore a few important works to the repertory; but Messrs.

FEBRUARY 10, 1940

Ziegler and Lewis, who have remained from the Gatti period, keep the Metropolitan today essentially what it was then.

February 10, 1940

A commentator on the musical scene—on the music, and on the ideas, the activities, the institutions which music brings into existence—is, I pointed out a while ago, bound to concern himself with other men's comment, since this is itself a part of the scene and a part that in considerable degree determines the rest. Criticism is one of the things that have interested me as a critic; it is the thing I am interested in as I look back on the eighteen years in which, at intervals, I have written for *The Nation*.

The critic has important functions: as a mere reporter, an appraiser of the particular musical event, he has the duty to give his reader not only an honest judgment but the basis of this judgment, the ideas about music and performance which will add up in the reader's mind to musical understanding, to a basis for his own judgment; the particular event gives the critic the occasion to consider the actual working of this organization or that institution in the light of what would be desirable; and events that determine the working of an institution, its structure, its very existence, are occasions for the critic to speak not only to his readers but for them. How, in those eighteen years, were these functions performed by the critics of important New York newspapers? Badly, I would say, recalling Olin Downes on the *New York Times*, Deems Taylor and Samuel Chotzinoff on the *World*; and this placed an even greater responsibility on men with the equipment, the position of W. J. Henderson of the *Sun* and Lawrence Gilman of the *Herald Tribune*.

Henderson's competence, honesty, and vigor made him the only first-line critic one could read with respect. Yet Walter Damrosch's career led him to conclude that "a sound musician, who is also a man of energy, generous impulses, and broad out-

look, can get well up toward the mountain tops without blowing his alp-horn every moment"—an appraisal which lent force to Shaw's contention that a critic should know no man, that "his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against his." It is an appraisal, moreover, which I draw attention to because it was this sort of treatment, most of it less honest than Henderson's, that enabled Damrosch to do the damage he did.

Henderson not only was uncritical of a friend; he was, in his last years, a little crotchety. Irritated by the commotion over virtuoso conductors he insisted that the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and the music of Beethoven and Brahms would remain even without Toscanini and even with a conductor of lesser magnitude, though he must have known that orchestra and music would sound different under such a conductor; he cited the excellence which the Boston Symphony had achieved under a single permanent conductor as a reason for the New York Philharmonic to do likewise, though he must have known that the Boston orchestra owed its excellence at least as much to the competence as to the permanence of its conductors. Writing in this way Henderson not only gave his readers incorrect ideas on conductors and orchestral performance but placed powerful arguments in the hands of the people who finally brought about the engagement of Barbirolli as single permanent conductor of the New York Philharmonic, which considerably reduced the orchestra's usefulness to the community.

More reprehensible, however, was Gilman's contribution to the same result. Henderson lived to hear the orchestra and Beethoven and Brahms as they sounded when conducted by Barbirolli, and disapproved. But Gilman, after Barbirolli's first appearance, wrote of a performance of Brahms's Fourth which had torn passion to tatters that it had "set the seal of musical piety and eloquence upon Mr. Barbirolli's gifts as an interpreter"; the modest virtues of some other performances elicited the statement that "the whole magnificent orchestra, strings and wind alike, sang with a clarity and depth and lusciousness of tone, an imaginative choiceness of phrasing and of style"; and

Barbirolli himself was elevated into "something better and rarer and finer than a conductor of power and sensibility. He permits us to think that he is akin to those uncommon interpreters who give us a measure of 'that inner standard of distinction, selection, refusal' which an incorruptible artist once defined: who have sifted from experience 'all that seemed beautiful and significant, and have treasured above all things those savings of fine gold.'" With this review Gilman was a great help to the influential people of the Philharmonic Symphony Society who were out to put Barbirolli over—the help, perhaps, that an orchestra's program annotator should be; but he failed in his obligations to his position as critic, to his readers, to the community whose orchestra the Philharmonic was.

He failed in these obligations, though he helped the people on the Metropolitan board, when in 1932 he wrote of the low quality of the Metropolitan's repertory as something imposed on an unsubsidized company by the low taste of the opera-going public to which it had to cater, and saluted Gatti-Casazza for his "dauntless action" in giving *Elektra*, his "truly heroic idealism" with *Pelléas*. For the truth, which Gilman knew, was that after the courageous Hammerstein had given these two works in 1907, the timid Gatti had waited until 1925 for *Pelléas* and 1932 for *Elektra*, and that only his low taste and complacency had been responsible for the low level of repertory and performances even in the prosperous years when the opera-going public had eaten out of the Metropolitan's hand. And there were other such failures.

But it was not only when he spoke that Gilman failed; as often the failure was in his silence. The ideas with which Taylor, Chotzinoff, and Downes filled the heads of their readers demanded critical consideration no less than the sounds made by conductors and violinists; but Gilman observed the code of music critics that I described recently: he never mentioned a fellow-critic except to pay him a compliment. In all the years that Chotzinoff blew his penny trumpet on the *World* his performances did not draw a word of comment from Gilman; only

when Chotzinoff published *Eroica* did Gilman break his silence, and then only to describe Chotzinoff as a critic with a "quick and warm responsiveness," a "guarding sense of measure and restraint," a style that was "spare, expressive, precise." Nor did Gilman find it necessary to comment on Downes until Downes published the talks he had given in the intermissions of the New York Philharmonic broadcasts. Then, referring to "the largely pretentious and semi-literate gush, rich in ignorance and error," with which Downes's predecessor had disfigured the broadcasts, Gilman quoted a passage by Downes: "In his scores he [Tchaikovsky] cries out, shakes his fist at the skies, remembers the agony of thwarted love, and the end of every man's desire. Admire such a man, such a neurotic, such a pessimist? I adore him, and rate him a thousand times higher than aesthetes who have never known Tchaikovsky's weakness and terror, who shudder at such emotional indecencies, and pull their skirts together at the sound of them." And of this Gilman wrote: "This is the right note, admirably skilful in its manner of insinuating information, yet never relapsing . . . from the plane of thought and feeling appropriate to a great subject."

Moreover, it was, as Gilman said, important that radio listeners who were hearing symphonic music for the first time be assisted with correct information and discriminating comment; yet this was the first time that he referred to the gush and ignorance with which Downes's predecessor had misled them for several years. The obligation of the music critic to concern himself with the broadcasting and recording of music, Gilman observed correctly on another occasion, was inescapable; yet he evaded it: he did not write a word about the program policies of the broadcasting stations, the rubbish that was spoken with the music, and he did not review records; nor, as a result, did anyone else review them in the *Herald Tribune* until quite recently.

Evidently, in the criticism of the past eighteen years there is little to recall with pleasure or respect.

MARCH 30, 1940

March 30, 1940

In the succession of dull works and undistinguished performances which the New Friends of Music presented in its chamber-music series this year the outstanding occasions were the performances of Mozart's String Quintets by the Budapest and Primrose Quartets. It was with these that the New Friends fulfilled its purpose and promise of offering the masterpieces which inertia in program-making leaves unperformed and unheard. When a string quartet decides to play a Mozart quintet it almost invariably chooses the G minor, never the E-flat or D major, which are superb works, and almost never the C major, which rivals the G minor in power. It was with the Budapest Quartet's performance of this work that the New Friends brought its rather inglorious series to a brilliant conclusion. And then it opened its orchestral series with a concert which must have been for others what it was for me—an experience to be cherished as long as memory could retain it.

Mozart's piano concertos occupy a special place in his works. He wrote them for the occasions when he presented himself to the public as composer-pianist; in each his object was to show all that he was capable of as a musician, and to show this in constantly new ways. In a single work, then, one gets his powers operating at incandescence, producing a breath-taking flow of miracles of loveliness, expressiveness, and wit; and in one work after another the unending variety of these miracles becomes overwhelming: consider, for example, the constantly and triumphantly new ways in which the all-important first entrance of the piano is contrived. Of the two dozen or so concertos which Mozart wrote in his entire lifetime at least ten are among his greatest works, with individual movements—the slow movement of K.467, for example—that are among the supreme musical utterances of all time. To say this is to say that they should be constantly in the orchestral repertory; but since conductors regard concertos not as part of the orchestral repertory but as vehicles for soloists—since, in other words, a

conductor does not decide to give Mozart's Concerto K.453 or 503 and engage a pianist to play it, but engages a pianist and chooses from whatever concertos the pianist offers—the result is that K.453 and 503 have not been played in New York in the twenty-five years that I have been attending concerts. It was only because Webster Aitken happened to offer K.450 that the Boston Symphony played it for the first time in its sixty years' history; and there are others which may remain unplayed by the Boston Symphony for the sixty years it will take another pianist to offer them.

The original announcement of the New Friends last year promised something more extensive than the four concertos of the present series. Originally, moreover, there was a possibility of Schnabel playing the ones that have been neglected; but in the end he chose K.466, which is the best known, K.467, which has had two performances in New York, and K.482 and 488, which have been played more frequently. The series, then, is not making the public acquainted with unfamiliar masterpieces; but it is revealing familiar ones in the light cast upon them by performances the like of which will not soon be heard again. I cannot think of a pianist capable of phrasing the long cantilena of that slow movement of K.467 as Schnabel did—a pianist, that is, who could give it the form, the significance with which Schnabel's fingers caused it to emerge from the piano; a pianist, in still other words, who brings to music the resources of matured emotion and understanding and pianistic skill that Schnabel brings.

One is bound to give first consideration to Schnabel's playing because of the primary importance of the solo instrument in these works and his masterly handling of it. But the Mozart concerto, as Tovey⁶⁰ has pointed out, employs the concerto principle of opposition of unequal instrumental forces that is basic in the earlier concertos of Vivaldi, Handel, and Bach; with the difference that in Mozart the use becomes more complex: the solo instrument not only is set off against the orchestra but is constantly involved in subtle interplay with strings and wood-

APRIL 6, 1940

winds which Mozart makes the unceasing wonder and delight here that they are in his operas. And in the New Friends performances this subtle interplay, this integration of orchestra with piano, was beautifully achieved with fine precision in execution and homogeneity of style.

April 6, 1940

Within a few days New Yorkers had opportunities to experience those tonal wonders of the age—the playing of the Boston Symphony under Koussevitzky and that of the Philadelphia under Stokowski. The two conductors are extraordinary virtuosos in their medium; but there the similarity ends. The surprising continence of Koussevitzky's performance of Beethoven's First was a measure of his growth as a musician, the greater refinement of his taste in the presentation of older music; whereas Stokowski's increasingly lurid performances are a measure of his deterioration. And it was Koussevitzky's passionate love of music, his passionate desire to make the points in Strauss's *Don Quixote* as effective as possible, that caused him to kill them with overemphasis; but the hash Stokowski made of the Good Friday music of *Parsifal*, among other things, represented his insensitiveness and indifference to anything in music but the opportunities it offers to produce gorgeous sounds and stunning effects with lush movements of his hands.

Stokowski at least offers the excitement of virtuosity, such as one gets from Horowitz on the piano or Heifetz on the violin; but Barbirolli does not offer even that to compensate for the musical defects of his performances and the wretchedness of his programs. If a director of an art gallery were to exhibit its collection defaced by his retouching the public clamor would cause him to be thrown out within a week. But Barbirolli, for four seasons, has been defacing Beethoven, Brahms, and in fact all the music in which he does not feel the restrictions imposed by the style of Haydn and Mozart; the press has been sour; even placid Friday afternoon dowagers have been moved to cancel subscriptions; yet he has been re-engaged for two years,

and the great New York Philharmonic Orchestra will celebrate its hundredth anniversary by exhibiting to an unadmiring world the mediocrity it has descended to under his direction.

In his new Cello Concerto—recently given its first American performances by Piatigorsky and the Boston Symphony—Prokofiev uses all the resources of his technique as ways of going through elaborate motions of saying a great deal when he is saying absolutely nothing. And it is not surprising that this grand-mannered pretense should impress the Soviet Russian critic Kuznetsov who is quoted in the program notes as having disapproved of the “salon spirit” of the charming *Peter and the Wolf*, as having demanded of a composer of Prokofiev’s stature nothing less than “earnestness and fidelity to himself,” and as having observed that the concerto “re-creates successively the main stages of Prokofiev’s inner evolution. This is not a panorama, but a synthesized, integrated picture. . . . The present Prokofiev is not yet as clearly discernible as the ‘early Prokofiev’ or the ‘middle-of-the-road’ Prokofiev. The Violoncello Concerto bears testimony to this. Its strongest points are in retrospection, totalizing the stages passed by the composer, rather than in its forward perspective. Prokofiev’s creative crisis has not been solved, and it cannot be solved without protracted and concentrated effort.”

Terms like “main stages of . . . evolution,” “retrospection, totalizing the stages,” “forward perspective,” “crisis” refer to nothing in Prokofiev’s music and to nothing that can be said in description or judgment of it; they are merely terms which are considered proper for criticism in Russia, because of the proper ideas about the close relation of art to economics (they recall a *Daily Worker* article some years ago on “A. F. of L.-ism in music”). As such they are ways of going through required motions; and in this respect they are like the “formalism,” “scholasticism,” “didacticism” that were applied to Eisenstein, and also like the revolting epithets applied by workers in factories and scientists in laboratories to the Finns, or the revolting hymns

MAY II, 1940

of praise to "the peace policy of the Soviet Union, which always respects the rights of small nations." I refer to these political manifestations to make clear what is of concern to me as a critic: the fact that the same enslavement and degradation of the mind (in a country in which no man may own a factory or a bank, so that other men's minds may not be enslaved and degraded) produce writing about the arts for which—if one is sensitive to intellectual rigor and integrity, and to their opposite—one needs the same strong stomach.

May 11, 1940

In Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, given by the Dessoff Choirs at the concluding concert of the New Friends of Music, there are magnificent pages of music, which most of us heard for the first time and may never hear again unless the Dessoff Choirs can be induced to repeat the performance, or one of the record companies, by some miracle, decides to record it. And this performance—unlike the performance of Mozart's Requiem that Victor saw fit to hand down to posterity—is one that merits recording. For what made the occasion outstanding was not only the superb music but the artistic conscience that was evident in every detail of the presentation: the warmth, spirit, sensitiveness in the singing of Mr. Boepple's chorus; the technical competence and excellent musicianship of the soloists; and for once the sound of an orchestra—the little orchestra of the New Friends—playing with interest in the occasion and willingness to contribute all it had, instead of the usual sound of eighty New York Philharmonic men condescending to the occasion and putting a choral conductor in his place. I would add that the inferior portions of the work which are mere adaptations of music by other composers might well be omitted from a recorded performance—or even, for that matter, from a concert performance.

Victor's recording of Roy Harris's Symphony No. 3 recalled to my mind a shrewd observation by Ernest Newman:^{42a} "The histories and biographies ring with denunciation of an Artusi or

a Hanslick for his depreciation of a Monteverdi or a Wagner; but we hear nothing of the critics who blundered even more grievously . . . but blundered in the other direction. For one first-rate work that has been underpraised, a hundred second-rate works have been overpraised; particularly is this true of today." Some of us, then, may be making fools of ourselves by thinking as little as we do of the talents and achievements of Roy Harris and his group; but so may the others who hear in this symphony "music of the bleak and barren expanses of western Kansas, of the brooding prairie night, and of the fast darknesses of the American soul. . . ." And listening to the symphony I am not afraid to take my chances. I'll take them even in the face of the fact that it has been played by Toscanini, and that Koussevitzky is said to have called it the first truly great orchestral work to be produced in America. It is the Harrisites who have talked loudest about the taste that led Toscanini to play Chasins ten years ago and Martucci and Catalani and Bach-Respighi constantly. And I have confidence in my own ability to hear greatness in music and the lack of greatness—to hear also the lack of inner musical impulse, and of any more musical ability than sheer determination needs to contrive a windy incoherence that will stand both for Roy Harris and for the bleak and barren expanses of western Kansas. In the present work, after an opening section in this synthetically unconventional and individual and inaccessible idiom that Harris has adhered to, it is interesting to hear indulgences in types of normal effectiveness—that is, in the prettiness of an idiom no less synthetically contrived out of the conventional pastoral style, and in the sure-fire impressiveness of an ostinato figure.

May 18, 1940

While records and musical events have claimed all available space in this column books have been stacking up. And readers impatient to know what I think of the book³⁴ that has been on everyone's tongue will have to bear with me a little longer

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while I speak first of Tovey's *Essays in Musical Analysis*,⁶⁰ the concluding volume of which has just appeared. It isn't that I underestimate the occasional shrewd perceptions and amusing performances in the book that is on everyone's tongue, but rather that the qualities of Tovey's writing make his six volumes of program notes for the Reid Orchestra concerts in Edinburgh one of the great classics in music criticism.

"My master, Parry," he writes in this last volume, "taught me to study the classics of music from point to point according to the course of each individual work." Through such examination of the works Tovey has acquired ideas of Haydn's, Mozart's, Beethoven's, Schubert's ways of composing that differ from the generally accepted ideas—those which critics have acquired not from study of the music but from reading each other. He has discovered also that the classical forms as practiced by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert are different from the classical forms as established in general belief by the theoreticians—"the kind of pedants," as Tovey says of the Viennese musicians who criticized the opening chord-progressions of Beethoven's First Symphony, "who are not even classicists, and whose grammatical knowledge is based on no known language." And these results of his study Tovey has embodied in his writing. I mentioned a while ago the monumental essay on Schubert in the first volume of *The Heritage of Music*,^{20a} in which he cites chapter and verse in Schubert's works to disprove the constantly reiterated fallacies about Schubert; and there are countless examples of this process in *Essays in Musical Analysis*. If, for example, you read the description of the form of the Mozart concerto in the booklet recently issued by the New Friends of Music to its subscribers, you should read Tovey's introductory essay on the subject and his further discussions of individual works in Volume III, in which, proceeding from point to point in the music, he corrects the ideas which compilers of handbooks of reference have copied from each other and program annotators have copied out of the handbooks.

Tovey acquired, in this way, knowledge enough for any man-

uscript-grubbing *Professor Doktor*. But operating through his knowledge are the love and enthusiasm and passionate interest and understanding for music that cause him to poke his head in among the notes of a work, that enable him to make musically significant and alive the technical minutiae he discovers, and that give color and warmth to what ordinarily would be cold pedantry. And there are additional significance and color and warmth from his interest and understanding for other things than music; from his personal warmth and high spirits; from his sharp and quick intelligence, which, as it goes along with its chief preoccupation of the moment, darts out in this direction or that at whatever fallacy or stupidity comes within range of its notice; and from the brilliant writing in which these express themselves. I am of course wrong in separating Tovey's understanding of music from his understanding of other things, from his personal warmth, his intelligence; for these are all part of his understanding of music. Cézanne's water color of some tree trunks, Walker Evans's photograph of a Birmingham mill district, the slow movement of Mozart's Concerto K.467—each represents a sensitiveness to a medium; but involved with this sensitiveness, operating through it, crystallized finally in each work of art is emotional and intellectual power—what the man is in feeling, mind, character, what he has experienced, what understanding his experience has given him. And so with the critic: his understanding of each of these works of art begins with a sensitiveness to the medium; but operating through this sensitiveness as part of his understanding, his judgment, his taste, are the qualities of his own mind, feeling, character, his own experience and understanding; and it is when unusual personal qualities of this sort are involved that we are aware of unusual critical insight and taste. The qualities not only are involved in the critic's understanding but are crystallized in his own written criticism; and as against the notion of criticism as a mere parasite on art—which most of it is—there is the fact that important criticism itself has some of the characteristics of artistic expression. That is, it involves the operation of sensi-

JULY 20, 1940

bility and intellect and character on its material, the art it deals with, and on its medium, the words in which it formulates itself; in the end, then, it is a type of literary expression with stylistic and aesthetic characteristics that convey qualities of feeling, mind, character precisely as painting or music does; and the term "great" may be applied to a critic—a Berlioz, a Shaw, a Tovey—in the same sense as to a painter or composer.

Tovey writes about what he finds in musical works when he studies them from point to point; and what he writes can be understood only by a reader who already knows the details that Tovey talks about or is able and willing to look them up as Tovey refers to them. The only way to learn anything about Schubert and his music is to go through the music. If one is as good as Tovey one will learn as much in this way as he did; if one is not as good as Tovey one does well to accept the guidance of what he writes about the symphonies in *Essays in Musical Analysis*, and to read that essay in *The Heritage of Music* and turn to each song, each sonata, each quartet as he refers to it. To learn about Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and the rest in this way takes effort, takes time, takes the \$4 for each slim volume of the *Essays*; and some may prefer to spend a couple of dollars and a couple of hours on the book that is on everyone's tongue. They won't learn anything about Schubert; but they will be amused by the anecdotal revelations of the unattractiveness of orchestral players, conductors, and American composers, among others. For myself, I'll take the music of Schubert and the wit of Tovey.

July 20, 1940

Arthur Tillman Merritt's *Sixteenth-Century Polyphony*³⁶ is an excellent exposition of the materials and practices of the music of Palestrina, Victoria, Byrd, and others of that period. Like R. O. Morris's *Contrapuntal Technique in the Sixteenth Century*³⁸ it has the basic excellence that its statements are derived from, and illustrated by, the music of these composers; and if you

AUGUST 3, 1940

ask in astonishment what else the statements should be derived from, that will mean you haven't studied counterpoint and other theoretical subjects as I and countless unfortunates did—from textbooks of whose rules Morris writes: "Who invented them, goodness only knows; why they have been perpetuated, it passes the wit of man to explain. Music written to meet their requirements is something altogether *sui generis*. . . . 'Music that never was on sea or land.' " Morris's *Structure of Music*,³⁹ incidentally, is a little book about musical forms which I recommend to the reader with an interest in the subject, and with the equipment he needs for it. For this book, too, is a summary of composers' practice that is illustrated by constant reference to their works; and Morris himself warns that unless the reader is able to turn from the statements in the book to the music they refer to—things like the fugues of Bach, the sonatas and symphonies of Mozart and Beethoven—the book will have little interest or value for him.

August 3, 1940

My criticism of the technical discussions of the music in recent Victor leaflets* brought three letters of protest, all of which praised the leaflets for their information about the composer's life and period and the way these affected his music. I don't

* March 23, 1940: "A couple of years ago I pointed out the 'ignorance that clothes itself in the terms of erudition' in the Victor leaflets. The leaflets signed A. Veinus now contain long, learned-sounding discussions of technical aspects of the music, studded with references to significant details, some of them given in musical notation. But the supposedly significant details turn out not to have their supposed significance: what is described as a theme and variations is actually a simple A-B-A form in which A on its return is ornamented somewhat; what is described as an example of variations on a ground-bass is actually a simple theme and variations. Nor is this surprising from a writer who cites the heart-rending slow movement of Schubert's Quintet Opus 163 as illustrating the 'rhapsodic exultation which, in the last year of his life, Schubert learned to evoke and control at will.' My advice is what it was—to listen to the music with one's own ears and use the leaflets for the various domestic purposes I suggested two years ago."

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deny that such information, when it is correct, is valuable; but I do say that to experience the effect of the arrangement of colors, planes, masses, lines, directions that constitutes a Cézanne still-life, the impact of the force that it embodies, one does not need to know any facts about Cézanne's life and period and their relation to things one may observe in his way of painting; and I say this is true also of a Mozart symphony. And I say that the information in the leaflets—and not only in leaflets—being what it is, one does best to do without it.

The Victor leaflets under discussion are slapped together from other writings—sometimes with quotation marks, sometimes without. To quote the effective statements of others at points in one's own line of thought is legitimate; but in these leaflets the slapping together is done for lack of any original thought, and sometimes without even a sense of direction in the slapping together. Thus, after a discussion of Berlioz's sensitiveness to literary stimuli we read: "The motives which led Berlioz to occupy himself so intensely with the composition of elaborate libretti for his instrumental works are still subject to speculation. It may be that 'Berlioz's failure to combine his many excitable impulses into an organic whole caused him to feel the need of a program which should explain the intention of his music.' (*Oxford History of Music*,⁴⁶ Vol. VI.) It may indeed have served 'to disguise a lack of constructive power.' It is much more probable, however, that this is entirely too simple and convenient an explanation"—explanation, that is, of the programs; "and that whatever inadequacies we find in the *Symphonie Fantastique* have profounder roots than such an explanation would indicate"—explanation, now, of the music's structural weakness. And with this sudden reversal of direction we read further: "Einstein, perhaps, has come closer to the heart of the matter with the suggestion that the traditional symphonic form which Berlioz did not discard was basically at variance with the elaborate kind of program which he tried to put across. The new content might well have demanded a new form." Here are grand flourishes of pretensions to knowledge by a man who

does not know from one clause to the next precisely what he is writing about. Such a man, assembling material from the writings of others, cannot tell good material from bad: preparing a leaflet about Berlioz's *Fantastic Symphony* he borrows from the *Oxford History*, borrows from Einstein, but overlooks the one book that demolishes the legends which the others repeat—the book by Tom Wotton.⁶⁵

"I claim no more authority for my ideas," says Wotton, "than that which can be obtained from a close study of his works (both musical and literary) for very many years." That is a great deal of authority for ideas about music to have, and a great deal more than can be claimed for most such ideas, and for most ideas about Berlioz. For it is no less true today than it was when Ernest Newman pointed it out thirty or forty years ago that our notions of Berlioz's music are derived from no experience at all of what those who know him claim are his finest works—*The Trojans*, *The Childhood of Christ*, the songs—and only from occasional hearings of the three excerpts from *The Damnation of Faust*, the *Roman Carnival Overture*, the *Fantastic Symphony*, the *Queen Mab Scherzo*, and one or two other excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*. But even these have been sufficient to confirm for me what Wotton says of Berlioz—that there was much extravagance in behavior and statement but little in his work, that "few composers have produced such fine effects with restricted means," and that "of all Berlioz's compositions, the Requiem alone really requires a huge orchestra and chorus in order to produce its proper effect." And if I had heard nothing but the *Queen Mab Scherzo* I would know that Berlioz was an artist not only of the most astounding and fascinating originality but of the utmost precision, finesse, delicacy, and subtlety in his use of the orchestra.

Even, then, if Einstein's experience of Berlioz's music when he wrote his *Short History of Music*¹⁷ about twenty-five years ago was, as I suspect, pretty much the same as mine—for that matter, if he had heard nothing but the three excerpts from *The Damnation of Faust*—he had heard enough to know

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Berlioz used an orchestra hardly distinguishable from Wagner's in *Die Meistersinger* and Debussy's in *Ibéria* and without the array of extra brass and woodwinds in Strauss's *Heldenleben*; that he used it in the *Minuet of the Will o' the Wisps* with admirable finesse; and that for the *Ballet of the Sylphs* he reduced it to five woodwinds, harps, kettledrums, and strings. Or if Einstein had heard all of *The Damnation of Faust* he had heard enough to know the quiet, subtle beauty of many of its pages. And if he wrote that "the full orchestra was his principal medium; only very occasionally did he handle smaller musical forces, preoccupied as he was with extreme and gigantic aims"—with the implication that the full orchestra was the medium only for extreme and gigantic aims; or that "he forged anew the poetry of *Faust* and *Romeo and Juliet* to his own ends, and monstrous works came forth, half oratorio, half symphony, half lyrical and half dramatic, all blazing with color," I conclude that Einstein wrote not of what he had heard in the music but of what he had heard about it, merely restating the old colorful legends in new colorful language. And the writer of the Victor leaflet merely restates them after him with additional trimmings—statements of Berlioz himself for which Wotton knows how to supply the context that gives them their correct meaning.

Hence, I repeat, listen to the music and do without the history.

September 28, 1940

Editors of The Nation:

Dear Sirs: When your Mr. Haggin recommends phonograph needles or qualities of recordings he is readable, but his attempts at musical criticism, of modern music, for instance, are lamentable.

A case in point was his foolishness about the recording of the new Roy Harris Symphony.* He wrote, "I have confidence in

* See page 40.

my own ability to hear greatness in music and the lack of greatness. . . ." Brave lad! He has listened to the Harris music and has found it lacking in greatness. Apparently Mr. Haggin does not live in America. Or does he live *too* much in America? When will he see that all of us may be dead before a *great* artist appears on the American scene, a Mozart or Beethoven, in *any* medium?

However, Mr. Haggin has a real point. He objects to the early deification of Roy Harris by his admirers, their premature reading of Kansas plains and Wyoming winds into his work. Mr. Haggin's dislike of the admirers themselves is even more intense than his dislike of the music. He is right: the admirers for the most part are just as uncreative and uncritical as Mr. Haggin himself, although they have one virtue—hopefulness.

I am not objecting to Mr. Haggin's personal preferences, but to his lack of *situation* within the American scene. To intimate, as he does constantly, that "Harris and his group" are not Mozarts may be truth; simultaneously it is impudent irrelevance, irresponsible, uncreative, and sterile, not to say reactionary. For today our "critics" can be useful only when they recognize that the Roy Harrises of our creative life are but beginners in *a country of beginners*.

The responsible critic sees the paucity of seriously intentioned musical talents here; he understands the necessity of humble and small beginnings, cherishes the smallest scrap of real talent—I am not here estimating the talent of Harris. He helps it, nourishes it, applauds and spans it, but always with a love for a future which, he knows, must grow from these small beginnings. Here original character in an art work is the astounding exception, never the rule. Pray, do not kick it in its young and tender face! In short, O wooden-head, spare that baby tree!

CLIFFORD ODETS

New York, September 15, 1940

The first thing to point out in answer to Mr. Odets's letter is that when I spoke of greatness in connection with the Roy

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Harris symphony it was only in the process of denying the claim of greatness made for him by his admirers; and since they hurled Koussevitzky's say-so at me I expressed confidence in my own ability to detect greatness in music and the lack of it in Harris. But then I went on to express confidence also in my ability to detect "the lack of inner musical impulse, and of any more musical ability than sheer determination needs to contrive a windy incoherence that will stand both for Roy Harris and for the bleak and barren expanses of western Kansas." In other words, the fault I found was not that the music wasn't great, but that it hadn't even the minimum of worth or interest that would merit the attention rightly given to some of the achievements of American painters, poets, novelists, or to the muddle-headed theatrical eloquence of Mr. Odets.

In saying this I was doing what I think Mr. Odets himself would concede to be my duty as a critic—which is, certainly, to report any talent or achievement I encounter, but also to report lack of such talent and achievement when I encounter that. All Mr. Odets may do is disagree with my judgment; and this—despite his insistence that he is not objecting to my preferences and not estimating Harris's talent—is what he *is* doing. When he implores me not to kick Harris's young and tender face he is asserting the existence of a talent and achievement that I deny.

But note further that my estimate of Harris has not—alas—caused him to stop writing: that if his music is as good as Mr. Odets thinks, it is so despite my kicks in the face; and on the other hand if it is as bad as I think, it is so despite the lavish caresses of Paul Rosenfeld. In other words, the nurture theory of criticism doesn't stand up. The composer can compose only with whatever sensitiveness to and command of his medium, whatever experience and emotion, whatever intellectual force, whatever sheer stamina he has, not with what the critic has; and if he has what it takes to produce good music he will produce it no matter what anybody says; but if he hasn't what it takes the critic can't give it to him.

If my criticism has not stopped Harris from writing it has not

destroyed what Mr. Odets thinks is the small beginning from which something big must come. But I don't believe that if I had succeeded in discouraging Harris from further writing I would have delayed the arrival of a more consequential composer. The fact that there *are* a hundred *Abie's Irish Rose's* and *Hotel Universe's* and *High Tor's* to one *Awake and Sing* doesn't mean, to me, that there *must be* a hundred such bad plays in order that there may be one *Awake and Sing*. It is true that the potentially important artist, when he appears, has got to have a tradition to sink roots in; but what he will turn to and draw on and work out from is the entire heritage of his art, not just the art of his own country—as Griffes and Copland did from the music of their European, not their American predecessors. And certainly not from the insignificant or bad art of his own country. Mr. Odets's experience included more than *Abie's Irish Rose* and *Hotel Universe*; and I don't think it was from them that he took off in writing his plays. Nor do I think any important composer of the future is going to take off from the Roy Harrises of today.

At the dinner with which the National Committee for Music Appreciation started its campaign for its new series of opera records John Erskine told a story of how the Committee and its first series of symphony records came to be—which had as much relation to the facts as the stories told in Germany today of the racial origins of the Germans. And from there, for a longer time than I could stand the performance, Mr. Erskine went on to talk about other musical matters with the utmost complacency in his complete lack of knowledge of what he was talking about. He spoke, for example, of a creation of his own imagination whom he called the eighteenth-century musician—who, he said, professed a gentlemanly disdain for anything as sordid as money (laughter), and finally created the manager to relieve him of the necessity of soiling his hands (laughter and applause). I suggest that the National Committee buy Mr. Erskine a copy of the Mozart letters, where he might learn that

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the goal of the real eighteenth-century musician—whether composer or performer—was a salaried post in a rich household, lacking which he went after any job that would earn a few ducats, and in the end had to resort to the middleman—the manager.

There would be no point in reporting all this if it were not that this man—making after-dinner triumphs out of the lives of the poor dead, and the lives of the living that he understood no better—was the man who had been placed in position after position of immense influence in musical affairs—who had had most to say about how the Juilliard millions should be used, and was now in control of the activities of the National Committee. Several years earlier Mr. Erskine had expressed icy lack of interest in opera as produced at the Metropolitan. Opera as produced at the Metropolitan has not changed radically; but Mr. Erskine was now a Metropolitan director; the National Committee's new series of records was its contribution to a campaign to build up interest in opera as represented chiefly by the Metropolitan; and the dinner was the occasion for presenting George A. Sloan, master tactician of the successful campaign to fasten the old opera house on the public's neck, with the Committee's annual award for distinguished cultural service to the community.

October 26, 1940

Friday, October 11, which was to end so extraordinarily, began ordinarily enough: breakfast, the *Times*, headlines about bombings, the Balkans, Willkie, and finally the Philharmonic's opening concert, which I had forgotten about after a glance at the list of works Mr. Barbirolli had chosen for the first weeks of the season. I went on to read Mr. Downes's swollen and muddy flood of words—about Sibelius's Second Symphony, for example, "a paean to the unconquerable spirit that is man," and the performance in which this work "was read, for the greater part, in bardic vein" and "there was breadth and sweep of line"; but

in which "a thoughtful reading was distinguished prevailingly by fine proportions and a real sense of form"; in which, however, "this feeling was lost . . . in places where tempo was too suddenly whipped up or slowed down"; and yet of which "the impression was of a too calculated performance, with many fine attributes, one which, had all previous calculations been forgotten, and the music given its head, would have been a complete instead of a conditioned success." Reading this, I felt the mists of New York newspaper reviewing rising about me; by evening, with the reviews in the *Post*, the *World-Telegram*, and *PM*, these mists were suffocating; and then the air was cleared by a piece of writing which a couple of excited telephone calls caused me to look up in the *Herald Tribune*. This was the review by Virgil Thomson, in which authoritative competence and fastidious taste expressed themselves with plain-speaking honesty, observing, for example, that the symphony, which was "vulgar, self-indulgent, and provincial . . . has a kind of popular power unusual in symphonic literature," and concluding that the music of the concert "was soggy; the playing dull and brutal."

Let me make clear that I didn't enjoy Mr. Thomson's review because I agreed with his judgments. As a matter of fact I think the excesses of the Sibelius adherents provoked him to counter-excess; and I suspect that the fact that "there are other conductors more highly paid than Mr. Ormandy" and "some that are more highly advertised" contributed to his statement—in his review of the Philadelphia Orchestra's first New York concert—that the performance of this coarse-grained musician is "civilized, sane, and effective beyond all comparison with that of his more showily temperamental colleagues." I expect to be irritated by what I suspect is Mr. Thomson's perversity as often as I am delighted by what I consider to be his penetration—the penetration of his observations on the Sibelius First Symphony that Ormandy conducted: "The formal structure, such as there was, was a sort of smooth piecing together of oddments, not unlike what is known to the film world as 'cutting.' As in a well-

DECEMBER 7, 1940

cut film, occasions for compensating the essential jerkiness of the flow were exploited whenever they could be found; at those moments something took place not unlike the 'plugging' of a theme song." What I respect is the equipment of musical understanding that I am aware of as much in the judgments I dissent from as in those I agree with.

That these reviews got into the newspaper which published Lawrence Gilman is beyond comprehension; that they will continue to get in is beyond belief; but while they do New York will have a music critic worth reading.

December 7, 1940

Listening to Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*—superbly done at a recent New Friends concert by Erika Wagner-Stiedry and a small group of players under Schönberg's own direction—caused me to think of Picasso's *Guernica* postscripts: what each series is concerned with, it seems to me, what each makes artistically concrete in its own way, its own artistic terms, is tortured human sensibilities. But with this similarity there are differences. There is, to begin with, the difference in the source, the character of the torture that each artist is concerned with—in the one case interior decay, disintegration; in the other externally applied violence and cruelty. There is also the difference in the quality of the experience and emotion that each artist brings to his subject; and the difference, finally, in the two ways, the two sets of artistic terms in which the artists make what they perceive and what they feel about it artistically concrete. It is these differences that make Schönberg's *Pierrot* a masterfully contrived thing of horror, and Picasso's postscripts constructively, affirmatively powerful works of art—possibly the most powerful works produced by a painter since Cézanne, possibly even the most powerful produced by any artist in any medium in that period.

Among the notable artistic achievements of the period have been the works that artists in different media have produced

together—ballets like *Petrouchka*, *Les Noces*, *The Prodigal Son*, *Harnassie*. To say this is to place Fokine and Nijinska on a level, in creative imagination and originality, with Stravinsky; Balanchine with Prokofiev; Cieplinski with Szymanowski; and there are people who will not do that. Quite recently a writer—trained in music and sensitive to other arts than his own—expressed to me his inability to stand more than a few minutes of ballet because after that the sameness of the positions and movements became boring. He was thinking of a ballet like *Les Sylphides*, and was confessing his inability to observe the differences in the personal styles with which the three ballerinas make those same movements of legs, arms, and bodies—differences which, communicating personality, temperament, emotion as they do, can be as exciting to some people as the differences in styles of tennis players are to others. Moreover, though able to appreciate the differences in the ways writers use the same words, composers the same sounds, painters the same colors, this man was unable to perceive the differences in the patterns created with those movements by Fokine in *Les Sylphides* and the patterns created by Petipa in *Swan Lake*. Nor was he considering the difference between *Les Sylphides* and those works in which the traditional ballet movements are only part of a larger vocabulary of bodily movement that is a medium for individual creative imagination and style; and presumably he would not consider the differences between these works—between Fokine's *Petrouchka* and Balanchine's *Baiser de la fée*, between this work of Balanchine and his *Cotillon*—considerable or important. But to me, as I observed them last spring and more recently, they were very considerable and very important; and in Balanchine's invention in particular I was made freshly aware of one of the most distinctive, impressive, and exciting of artistic minds—this not only in those strokes of imagination and wit that somebody I know once happily named *fantaisie Balanchine*, but in the fascinating things he makes out of the traditional movements. The pas de deux of the twirling ballerina supported by male dancer that one sees in every classical ballet

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occurs in every work of Balanchine, but each time as something newly and beautifully imagined: it is the series of wonderfully strange movements of the *Hand of Fate* episode in *Cotillon*; it was the seduction, ending in the interlocking of the two bodies, in *The Prodigal Son*. (I must add that much of the original detail of *Cotillon* is missing from the work as it is danced by the De Basil company nowadays, and that *The Prodigal Son* is being given with new choreography by Lichine in place of Balanchine's for the 1929 Diaghilev production.)

Listen while you look at that strange pas de deux in *Cotillon*, and you will hear the related strangeness of Chabrier's music. All of Balanchine's work provides similar evidence of the extraordinary feeling for music with which he operates as a choreographer.

January 11, 1941

If *Fantasia* were being shown in the way anything else of Disney's is shown—that is, just the sequences of images and music with no verbal introductions in the program or from the screen—one would take it as one takes anything else of Disney's: as something primarily and chiefly for the eye. One takes a Disney film in this way despite its occasional use of music; and one would take *Fantasia* in this way even though the music was by important composers and was used in the film sequences as it is in a ballet. And taking it in this way one would not be too upset when the music was misused.

One would, that is, note in certain instances the use of music without regard for its essential quality, or even for specified programmatic meaning and for organic structure. Disney's *Water Ballet* may be charming, but Tschaikovsky's music is an *Arabian Dance*. The first and second movements of Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony have programmatic meaning, but only of a generalized sort—only as much as is embodied in the "pastoral" idiom of the first, the murmuring strings of the second, not Disney's charming pictures of flying horses in the first, nor his

monkeyshines of centaurettes in the second. Moreover the music establishes an emotional level for any imagery associated with it—a level which some of the centaur-centaurette details fall far below. And finally, with the country indicated by the “pastoral” idiom of the first movement, the emotions aroused by the country are embodied in a purely formal design which is not indicated in the pictures of *Fantasia* and is destroyed even in the music—the exposition of material being used without the development and recapitulation that make out of this material the organic sequence which *is* the first movement of Beethoven’s *Pastoral* Symphony. One would note the similar inadequacy of the pictures to the content and quality of Stravinsky’s *Sacre du printemps*, and the fact that the work was not only chopped up but rearranged. One would note that Disney failed equally when he set out to be faithful to large-scale musical content and structure—when for the purely formal design of sounds in combination and motion in Bach’s Toccata and Fugue he created a purely formal design of line, mass, and color in motion, a literal sight-for-sound translation (like Massine’s of the final passacaglia movement of Brahms’s Fourth) which did not even remotely represent the substance and organic development and structural complexity of Bach’s music or exert anything remotely comparable with the power of the music’s formal eloquence. But in the situation I have assumed, in which *Fantasia* would be offered as something for the eye, these things would not be anything to get upset about, as they are in the actual situation, in which *Fantasia* is offered as a presentation of the music—in the combined form of the sound itself and a pictorial representation of its meaning, quality, structure.

Actually, that is, one is handed a program which opens to a statement by Stokowski that “the beauty and inspiration of music must not be restricted to a privileged few but made available to every man, woman, and child. That is why great music associated with motion pictures is so important, because motion pictures reach millions all over our country and all over the world.” This act of Stokowski’s, in which he brings to the many

what has been jealously withheld from them by the privileged few, was phony even ten years ago when with four one-hour broadcasts spread over months he first brought the beauty and inspiration of music to those who had been hearing Toscanini's two-hour broadcasts with the New York Philharmonic every Sunday. But even if one accepts Stokowski's assumption that the millions who will see *Fantasia* have never heard a broadcast of a symphony or an opera, then it is a matter of great concern that what is offered to them as the first movement of Beethoven's *Pastoral*—to consider only the music itself—is the exposition of material without the development and recapitulation which continue and complete the organic sequence; that they are offered Stravinsky's *Sacre* chopped up and rearranged, its essential quality falsified by things like the perfumed phrasing of the stark opening woodwind passages, the lush sonorities elsewhere; that Bach's Toccata and Fugue, played complete, is falsified by a performance which imparts to it the feverish excitement that Stokowski imparts to any music he conducts, and which makes of it the mere succession of dazzling effects of orchestral virtuosity and sonority that music is for him.

But *Fantasia* does not offer the music by itself; and a couple of pages further one reads that the "movements, situations, colors, and characters which the music painted on the canvas of [the Disney artists'] imaginations" should make the average listener "much less humble about his ability to understand good music." Images of movements, situations, colors, and characters are properly the effect of program music; but not any and all such images; and it is a matter of some concern that millions of people should be given the idea that images like Disney's represent understanding of some of the program music in *Fantasia*. Moreover, it is questionable whether from music with generalized programmatic significance like the first movement of the *Pastoral* Symphony one should derive anything more specific than the impression of "country" from the "pastoral" idiom, and whether, for the rest, the effect of the movement should not be that of its formal design. Of this formal design,

obviously, representational images of characters and situations are not properly the effect; but neither are non-representational images, such as Disney offers with Bach's purely formal Toccata and Fugue. Speaking from the screen Deems Taylor introduces this sequence with the statement that "what you will see . . . is a picture of the various abstract images that might pass through your mind if you sat in a concert hall listening to this music." The fish swims, the woodpecker pecks, and Mr. Taylor—called on to speak about music—exercises his extraordinary capacity for subtly, and in effect treacherously, obfuscatory statement that gives error the appearance of reasonableness and truth themselves. There are implicit in his statement, as though they were true, certain ideas that are false: the idea that the images which accompany Bach's Toccata and Fugue—images contrived by long and hard imaginative effort—are the kind that would pass through anyone's mind at a concert, or the ones that did pass through the Disney artists' minds in this casual way; the idea that these images can be taken as the proper effect of Bach's Toccata and Fugue; the idea, in general, that images are the proper effect of such music. It is cause for great concern that millions of people are to be given these ideas about music; and on this point there is more to say, but it will have to wait.*

February 8, 1941

Not long ago I was playing records for a pianist who is one of the finest musicians I know; and at one point, without telling him what it was, I started the first side of Gieseeking's recording of the Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4. He listened expectantly for the piano's phrase that opens the work; with the first chords his face darkened; and almost before the phrase had ended he jumped up and demanded angrily: "Who plays in that terrible way? The music is not right with such staccatos"; and rushed to the piano to show me what the phrase sounded like when it was "right."

* See page 68.

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His reaction, I dare say, will appear excessive to some people—the people who probably find my comments on Stokowski's performances just as wildly extravagant. These people cannot believe that a performance on the Giesecking or Stokowski level of competence can be that bad; or that the differences between the performances of a Schnabel and a Giesecking, a Giesecking and a Horowitz, a Toscanini and a Stokowski are that considerable—enough to make one performance so much better or worse than another; or that there are any criteria for such judgments. But they would not express these doubts about differences in ways of speaking a Shakespeare sonnet or one of Hamlet's monologues. They bring to poetry an understanding that each arrangement of words constitutes a form in which a large part of the meaning of the poem is implicit; that the process of speaking the poem is a process of giving it one physical form or another in actual sound, and in this way one meaning or another; that the process may distort the form and falsify the meaning. And they bring to the particular poem a precise idea of what it is and what it is not, what it means and what it does not, in what spoken physical form it has this meaning and in what form it has not. It is because they bring all this to poetry that they know one way of speaking the poem can be better or worse than another, and recognize better or worse when they hear it; and it is because they don't bring the same understanding and knowledge to music that they can't tell better from worse in musical performance and don't believe anyone else can.

But the musician I have mentioned did bring to Giesecking's treatment of the opening phrase of Beethoven's concerto the understanding that the arrangement of sounds in a musical phrase constitutes a form in which the content of the phrase is implicit; that the process of performing the phrase is a process of giving it one physical form or another in actual sound, and in this way one meaning or another. He did bring a precise idea of what this particular phrase was and what it was not, what it meant and what it did not, in what physical form it had this meaning and in what form it had not. And he was angered

by a form which—with its swift, light, detached chords—destroyed the spaciouly meditative quality that he thought the phrase should have, and that it does have, for example, in Schnabel's recorded performance. And for the same reasons I am angered by a Stokowski performance of Bach that gives the work a distorted physical form in which it acquires the feverish excitement of the *Bacchanale* from *Tannhäuser*.

There are no Stokowskis acting Shakespeare; and if the public brought to music what it brings to poetry and drama there would be no Stokowski playing Bach. Because it doesn't, the public which understands that a man may speak the lines of Hamlet with sounds that are exciting in themselves but inadequate or wrong or absurd for the effect and meaning of the lines, does not understand this about Heifetz or Horowitz or Stokowski playing Beethoven. For myself, I am bound to marvel at the beauty of the sounds that Heifetz or Horowitz or Stokowski produces with his instrument, but I am equally bound to note that the meaning conveyed by these sounds is not the meaning Beethoven has for me. And if, on the other hand, Toscanini's recent performances of Verdi's Requiem and Beethoven's Missa Solemnis were great performances for me, it was not merely because of tonal marvels like the supple radiance and sheen of the choral sonorities that he produced with the superb Westminster Choir ("They're a fine chorus," as some one remarked, "but they're not that good"). Certainly I had ears for these things, and emotions for what was behind them—that completely personal and wonderful feeling of Toscanini's for the plastic quality of musical sounds. But what made them great performances for me was the effect and meaning which the two works had in the tonal embodiments that Toscanini gave them.

And so with Mitropoulos. What excited the New York Philharmonic audience to cheers, in a performance of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, was his demonstration of power—power over the minds and wills and bodies of the Philharmonic players, which he demonstrated by exerting power over the music: with *fp*'s on a single chord augmented to explosive *ffffpppp*'s, with

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crecendos and decrescendos over a measure or two augmented to violent expansions and contractions of sonority, with phrasing that twisted the shape of the phrase. Certainly one wants a conductor to have competence in conducting: but this competence—like competence in manipulating a violin or a piano—is not properly an end in itself; it is the means for the achievement of the proper end of musical performance—a form in actual sound in which the piece of music has the meaning and effect it should have. If that Philharmonic audience had brought to the performance an idea of what Beethoven's Fourth Symphony is and what it means and what it must sound like to have that meaning, it would have realized that Mitropoulos—in effect using the work as something with which to demonstrate his virtuosity—was distorting its form and falsifying its character and meaning. As for me, since my only interest in a conductor—whether it is Toscanini or Mitropoulos—is in what meaning the music has when he conducts it, and since I have an idea of what Beethoven means, I don't want Mitropoulos around conducting Beethoven.

February 15, 1941

Though I missed the League of Composers' program of music for documentary films I had previously seen *The City*, with its Aaron Copland score most of which—except the music for the traffic jam sequence—I had thought poor for its purpose. And last summer I had attended a private showing of *Valley Town* arranged by the Educational Film Institute for the music critics, to get their reactions to controversial features of the score by Marc Blitzstein. On that occasion, waiting for the other critics, who did not show up, I mentioned to a couple of Film Institute members the question in my mind whether music was essential to films, since with the pictures by themselves one not only could convey the bare sense of any situation but—through use of pictorial values, of pace, of cutting, and so on—should be able to give this sense almost any desired emotional heighten-

ing and impact. My question was brushed aside with an impatient "Music has always been part of films—like opera." True, there has been drama with music; but there has also been drama without it; by analogy there can be a film without music, which the resources of the medium should be able to make effective (and recently I had occasion to decide that parts of *Our Town* would have been more impressive alone than they were with Copland's music). Certainly I would expect that a documentary, which sets out to present a factual record of people and things as they are and as they function, would be such a film—would, that is, give only the music which happened to be part of the facts of a situation, like a song coming from a phonograph in a room. In a film like *Valley Town*, then, I would expect shots of men working in a steel mill to be accompanied by the noises of the mill, not by "steel mill music" composed by Marc Blitzstein.

If, however, the shots of a steel mill are accompanied by music, this music must intensify the effect of the pictures in the way that music, if it is good for its purpose, intensifies the effect of the words and actions in an opera. And the first thing to say of Blitzstein's music for *Valley Town* is that it had no such value for its purpose. This was true of both the uncontroversial portions and the controversial ones, which I will now describe. The documentary film has its own conventions, most of which are derived from its very nature: one uses not actors but the people actually involved in the situation; one films only the things which these people actually do and say. An additional convention is the voice of the commentator, which, adding to what the film has recorded, may tell us what the people think. Now the man who made *Valley Town* went beyond these conventions when, filming an unemployed worker on his way home after a day's fruitless search for work, he did not have him say to another worker: "What am I goin' home for?" or did not have the commentator tell us of the despair in such men's minds, but had the worker himself think his thoughts aloud for us without moving his lips. This procedure Blitzstein carried a

step further: at home the worker's wife *sang* her thoughts aloud. And this brings me to the second thing to say of Blitzstein's score—that while it did not offer any music with the significance and power that were required, it did offer a feature that was novel, daring, provocative of controversy.

I mention this because it is characteristic. Putting aside things like the burlesque torch song, I cannot conceive of sounds being feebler and flatter, sounds having less of the significance and effect they were intended to have, than the sounds which I heard during the first act of *No For An Answer*; but the act had its "Fra-a-a-ancie, ta-ta-ta-ta-ta" which was clever and amusing and covered Blitzstein's inability to write music for the emotions of a couple in love—or in fact for any serious emotions or situations whatever. And it was no less characteristic in Blitzstein's pre-proletarian period. Then as now he was a brilliantly gifted person, with the specifically musical gifts of a superb pianist, but—in my judgment—without the specific gift for composition, without the ability not just to manipulate sounds but to manipulate them into designs that had artistic potency. Then as now he could not produce music of any importance but could think up something novel to claim attention with, like a string quartet with the three movements written *Largo, Largo, Largo*, and achieving differentiation through texture instead of pace.

At that time Blitzstein got the attention only of the few people interested in the novelty of a string quartet with the three movements written *Largo, Largo, Largo*; today he gets the attention of the larger number of people interested in dramatizations of the class struggle. Writing about Columbia's *Chain Gang* album last September, I pointed out that there were people who, because of what they felt about the cruelties inflicted on Negroes in chain gangs, would be moved by the songs in this album as they would not be if they heard the songs without the words or without any other knowledge of what they were about. Now, recalling the warmth of the Mecca Temple audience's response to Blitzstein's opera, I shiver a little

at the thought of what this audience's response would have been to the music if it had been presented without the words or anything else to reveal its connection with unions and vigilantes. For I am sure the response would have been as frigid as the response of such an audience a few years ago to the quartet with the three movements written *Largo, Largo, Largo*.

February 22, 1941

The artistic resources of voice, of personal emotion, of specifically musical feeling that Lotte Lehmann brought to the singing of Schubert's *Winterreise* cycle for the New Friends of Music were, as always, deeply affecting—and this, as always, whether what she did with a song seemed right or wrong. Right and wrong, in this matter, have to do with scale—the scale on which emotion is embodied in form in a sonnet of Shakespeare as compared with his dramatic blank verse, in a song of Schubert as compared with an operatic aria. It is wrong to speak the sonnet as though it were the blank verse; and Lehmann often loads emotion on the song to the point where its physical shape is distorted. One is, then, moved by the intensity that communicates itself through her singing of the last phrases of *Die Krähe*; but at the same time one is aware that this intensity is distorting the phrases almost grotesquely; and one is aware also that the voice is being forced into unlovely sounds. It is to quiet songs like *Das Wirtshaus* and *Die Nebensonnen* that her emotion gives forms which are unforgettable musical experiences.

I don't want Mitropoulos around conducting Beethoven; nor do I want him conducting Franck.* In the second movement of the Symphony the introductory passage for plucked strings and harp is marked *p* with a swell in the fifth measure; but Mitropoulos, in his recorded performance, converts this to *pp* with an explosion to *f* that is excessive for the degree of emotional in-

*But soon afterward he produced a superb performance of Mahler's First.

MARCH 15, 1941

tensification implied in the upward curve of the theme in the fifth measure. And in the first movement he pauses for an extra quarter at the end of the first measure, and again at the end of the second measure, separating from each other the parts of what is—when allowed to take its natural course—a continuous sequence. But to allow a passage of music to take its natural course is precisely the thing Mitropoulos cannot do. For that he is too unrelaxed; and when his tenseness doesn't produce explosive violence it shows itself in the manipulation that breaks the flow of the music—unrestrained as it is by the plastic sense for proportion and coherence in the sound-in-time continuum that would prevent not only the discontinuities of sonority and pace in a phrase but the larger discontinuities of tempo in a movement.

There is similar constant, though less violent, manipulation and distortion in Furtwängler's performances—for example, the one of Beethoven's Ninth that I heard in Salzburg in 1937, which was a butchery of the work by a tasteless effect-monger. Another example is the recorded performance of Beethoven's Fifth, in which continuity is broken now for a finely-drawn pianissimo, now for some other such purpose. And now there is the recorded performance of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, in which one hears the characteristic over-deliberateness followed by frenzied acceleration.

March 15, 1941

Each time that I hear Webster Aitken play the piano I am astonished all over again by what distinguishes him from other pianists of equal talent. What his playing offers—as against the warmth, the plasticity, the fluency of theirs—and what is heard with a shock after those qualities, is the sharp contours and powerful tensions of a concentrated style that gives the music the impress of individual, forceful, and extraordinarily matured qualities of mind and feeling. In the middle section of the second movement of Mozart's Concerto K.595, which Aitken

played recently with the New York Philharmonic under Walter, these contours and tensions—created with the utmost subtlety in phrases that revealed themselves with the utmost quiet—made the long cantilena one of the most exciting things I have ever heard.

In a properly organized musical life such a musician would be heard constantly and everywhere—in solo recitals, in performances with orchestras, in broadcasts, on phonograph records. In our commercialized musical life such a musician has almost no place. A man who plays Beethoven's *Diabelli* Variations and Schubert's sonatas is not material for commercial exploitation by the two huge concert-management combines which monopolize concert activity throughout the country by their own system of block-booking, and which use this system to fill the ears of the population eternally with the easy effectiveness, the sentimentality, the flashy virtuosity of standardized programs of Chopin Nocturnes, Liszt's Rhapsodies and *Liebestraum*, and, at most, Beethoven's *Pathétique* and *Moonlight* and other early sonatas. A superb musician who is not built up into a commercially valuable property by these managements is not worth anything to broadcasting and record companies which traffic in currently celebrated names. Nor is he worth much to symphony orchestras; and if he chooses to give the audience and critics subtlety in a Mozart concerto instead of thundering imposingly for them in Beethoven's *Emperor* he is not likely to be engaged soon again.

Nor—from the story as it has reached me—is even the one experience what it should be. Concerto performances as perfectly integrated—which is to say as carefully worked out in rehearsal—as those of Schnabel with the New Friends of Music Orchestra last year, and with the National Orchestral Association the year before, are exceptional. A conductor, as I have pointed out on occasion, normally does not put a concerto on a program as something worth doing for itself, like a symphony. It is, instead, something he has to accept with the soloist, and something he has little interest in, since its purpose is to show

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off the soloist, not himself. If, then, he has two and a half hours in which to rehearse a Mozart concerto and a piece of rubbish by Korngold for orchestra alone, he will give most of the time to the rubbish by Korngold—unless the soloist is important enough to command the time necessary to achieve some degree of homogeneity of phrasing and style and some degree of integrated execution in the joint performance. If the soloist is only a young American he will get the last thirty minutes of the rehearsal for a work that requires that long merely to play through—time enough, in fact, merely to rush through it once, and not time enough for the soloist to make his wishes known, or for the conductor, himself a Mozart specialist with his own sentimental way of playing the music, to discover that the soloist is one whose wishes merit consideration. The result is an all but improvised performance in which our young American must concentrate all his attention and effort into merely fitting his notes smoothly into the work as the conductor creates it in accordance with his own conception of it. Mr. Walter—by the evidence of his recent performances with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera Association—is a man of impressive gifts as conductor and musician; but that performance of Mozart's K.595 was, among other things, an example of a virtuoso conductor's artistic consciencelessness and personal ruthlessness.*

May 10, 1941

To go on with the subject of *Fantasia*†—and Deems Taylor in particular—offering images as the proper effect of music: In a review of *Men of Music*⁸ about a year ago I referred to Aldous Huxley's essay *Music at Night*, in which he writes of what a painting, by "the forms and their arrangement . . . the disposition of the lines and planes and masses," will say "to any-

* A year earlier Aitken had been given a thirty-minute rehearsal of Mozart's K.450 by that nurturer of youthful talent, Koussevitzky.

† See page 56.

one in the least sensitive to the eloquence of pure form." For a person with sensitiveness to the eloquence of form in sound a Mozart symphony has exciting meaning; for a person without this sensitiveness it has no meaning at all: neither the meaning of its formal eloquence, which he cannot perceive; nor the meaning he looks for—expressible in words, and concerned with actions and ideas—which the music does not convey. In this situation he may be led to misconceptions: if he fails to realize that any special sensitiveness is involved, if instead he lives on the democratic assumption of the adequacy of his normal equipment to any subject, any experience, if he thinks of the meaning as one that can be translated into verbal statements about ideas or actions, then he may feel that if there is really anything in the music to be understood he can understand it, and that all he needs is to have it explained to him in the right terms, or that there is something to know *about* the work, which, if he were told it, would give him the perception he lacks. And from these misconceptions he may be led to resentments and suspicions—resentment of the person who claims the understanding, the special equipment that makes understanding possible; suspicion that this person is withholding a meaning which he could reveal if he chose, or is pretending to understand a meaning that really isn't there to be understood.

In this situation the difficult thing to do is to correct the misconceptions and remove the resentments and suspicions: to get the person for whom the symphony means nothing to realize that understanding in this case involves a special sensitiveness to the "eloquence of pure form" which one person may have and another not; and to get him to believe that those who claim to be excited by the music but cannot tell him what they are excited by are not all snobs or frauds. And this is made even more difficult by the writers and speakers who do the easy and profitable thing, which is to defer to the misconceptions and nourish the resentments and suspicions by giving their reader or listener the verbal interpretations and biographical details he asks for and encouraging him to suspect anyone who insists

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that music is not to be understood by such means, and that its eloquence of pure form is to be understood only through the special sensitiveness for this eloquence.

This encouragement of resentment and distrust of the specially equipped person who understands music in a way the unequipped person does not—a form of cultural rabble-rousing—is something one encounters constantly; and it is a frequent practice of Deems Taylor. There is no jazzing of the classics, no gaudy orchestral metamorphosis of Bach, no “synthesis” of Musorgsky, no tabloid version of a symphony movement—in short no vulgarity or outrage perpetrated on music—that is not accompanied by its recommendation to the public to pay no attention to the “purists” who will disapprove of what healthy, normal people will enjoy. Such statements have been issued with *Fantasia*; and the prize must go as usual to Taylor who, in his introduction spoken from the screen in which he offers the pictures as the meaning of the music, points out that “these are not going to be the interpretations of trained musicians—which I think is all to the good.” In other words, take what a Disney artist makes of music, and by implication anything that anyone makes, in preference to what a musician makes of it.

Note that in this instance it is a trained musician himself who makes such a statement—one of the trained musicians who are largely responsible for the things that are done to music in *Fantasia*. For the fact is that Disney did not trust himself to work alone—that coming to the music of Bach and Beethoven and Schubert he seems to have felt he could do only what would be sanctioned by people who understood Bach and Beethoven and Schubert in a way he did not, people whose sanction would be a guarantee of artistic rectitude—people like Stokowski and Taylor. It is, then, Stokowski and Taylor who are responsible for the conversion of Schubert’s *Ave Maria* into a Hollywood Gothic apotheosis for Musorgsky’s *Night on Bald Mountain*. True, it was Stravinsky himself who assented to what is done with his *Sacre du printemps*; but Stravinsky—a mere composer who does not earn by writing music the sums that a Stokowski

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and a Taylor get for doing the jobs they do—may be forgiven for picking up a little extra money in this way.

And one consequence of Disney's step may be noted in conclusion: Fifteen years ago the public on which Stokowski and Taylor practiced their corruption of taste and understanding was a few thousand people in concert-halls, a few thousand readers of a newspaper; later, radio offered them a medium of communication with millions all over the country; and now Disney has given them still another medium with which to reach additional millions.

June 14, 1941

With no brilliant stage spectacle to claim one's attention at the recent concert performance of *Four Saints in Three Acts* in Town Hall, one gave it wholly to Virgil Thomson's music—to the unique method and its delightful and at times moving result. By separating and differentiating the flat repetitions of a Gertrude Stein verbal sequence Thomson's music articulates them, gives them point and even sense; the music also imparts to them its own structure, climax; and its effect is often the most delightful humor. Some of the humor consists in skilful musical pointing up—by the high-lighting of a group of words, the placing of it in relation to its context—of Miss Stein's surprises and irrelevances of juxtaposition; and to these Thomson adds occasional incongruities of his own contriving between words and music—words of little or no sense or weight, and style and structure of great emotional import and weight in the music. But when such music is given to words like the "led, said, wed, dead" sequence the result is very moving. And in addition to the pleasure from the work there was the pleasure from the superb voice and style of Edward Matthews, the fine singing of Beatrice Robinson Wayne, the magnificent work of the chorus, in the performance expertly directed by Alexander Smallens.

A few days before this beautiful performance of a sophisti-

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cated work by trained Negro singers the fourth Coffee Concert at the Museum of Modern Art offered Negro religious music sung by members of the Reverend Utah Smith's congregation of the Church of God in Christ, Newark, who used only their fine natural voices and innate musical feeling. Recalling what such occasions can be made into one was impressed by the managerial skill and tact that had made these people feel at ease and had then placed them on the stage and left the rest entirely to them—left it to the Reverend Smith himself to run his show and get tangled up engagingly in his words, his ideas, his guitar, his wings, and left it to the others to sing and act their naive musical narratives with complete absorption, with affecting intensity, and in some instances with exciting vocal and musical style.

October 4, 1941

Periodically we are told that opera has not established itself in this country because it has been sung in foreign languages and people have not been able to understand what it was about. Opera is popular in Europe, according to this argument, because in each country it is sung in the language of the country; and if it is to acquire a large audience here it must be sung in English.

But if we go back to the early days of opera in Europe we find that it was sung everywhere in Italian. Mozart's operas, for example, were written to Italian words and sung in Italian in Vienna; and I doubt that there were many in the audiences who knew the language well enough to follow the meaning of the text as it was sung. Yet this did not keep people from the performances—which means that they must have had some other reason for going. And I find it reasonable to suppose that they went for the music and cared enough about it to acquaint themselves with the text in advance—which is what people do in Vienna today.

In Vienna today Mozart's operas are sung in German trans-

lations; and without considering what is lost by having music that was written for the soft sound and easy flow of Italian sung to the harsh and cumbersome German words, we must note the fact that the people who attend the performances read librettos beforehand or in the intermissions, just as they do here. The reason is that the words of opera are difficult to hear: they are distended and made unintelligible in the process of being sung; the orchestra drowns them; most of the people are too far from the stage. Even, then, if we accept the contention that to be interested in opera Americans must be able to follow the text, we face the fact that singing the opera in English would not enable them to do so, and that to understand what was going on they would still have to read the libretto beforehand. And if the words are not going to be understood anyhow the opera should be sung in its original language. But in addition we have the fact that in Vienna it is not the ability to follow every word that is responsible for interest in opera, but rather the interest in opera that induces people to find out from a libretto what they need to know about the business on the stage.

This interest exists here too. The number of people who are interested is comparatively small; but it is comparatively small in Europe too: the number of people interested in any art anywhere is comparatively small. It is true that many Germans love music; but for most of them this music is not Mozart and Wagner: in Vienna and Berlin opera is attended by the same minority that is interested in the other forms of serious music. And that is true here. I see no reason to believe that giving opera in English would cause the millions who go to the movies to go to the opera: the ones who would go would be—as they are now—the ones who were interested in things of that sort. The battle for opera in this country has been and still is part of the battle to interest people in serious music; because opera is the most difficult and most expensive form of music to give the battle has been fought with the other forms; and I contend that wherever it has been won with, say, orchestral music a potential audience

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has been created for opera as well, and that the difficulty and expensiveness which have prevented opera from being given in those places have prevented such potential audiences from being converted into actual audiences for opera.

Its expensiveness brings us to another point. Some who contend that opera has not established itself and has no place in this country mean not only that opera has a small public but that it does not pay for itself. But there are artistic activities and institutions—and they include musical activities and institutions—which by their very nature, by the very set-up they involve, cannot pay for themselves. A museum does not pay for itself; does anyone contend for this reason that it ought to be closed? Our symphony orchestras do not pay for themselves; does anyone conclude that symphonic music has no place in this country? Opera does not pay for itself in Vienna; is anyone going to contend that it has not established itself and has no place there? I would say that it has established itself, made a place for itself, acquired an audience in Vienna precisely because it was not expected to pay for itself; whereas in this country, because it is expected to pay its own way, prices have been charged that have made it impossible for many to go who would have liked to go. What opera in this country needs is not English words but low prices. At low prices even the Hippodrome was filled—for performances in foreign languages.

October 11, 1941

Under the title *A Musician Talks*⁶² two small volumes of lectures by the late Donald Francis Tovey have been published by the Oxford University Press—one with the subtitle *The Integrity of Music*, the other with the subtitle *Musical Textures*. They offer an integrated statement and development of some of the ideas in a body of writing—the articles in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*⁶¹ and Cobbett's *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*,¹¹ the famous program notes for the Reid Orchestra reprinted in *Essays in Musical Analysis*, the editions of

Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*³ and *Art of Fugue*^{4,59b} and Beethoven's sonatas,^{7,59a} the other articles, pamphlets, lectures—of which Ernest Walker says rightly in his preface: "There is nothing like it in all English nor, so far as I know, in any other language."

"He had read and remembered in detail," says Walker, "and, what is more, methodically assimilated into his personal scheme of aesthetics, every page of live music from Byrd and Lassus and Palestrina to the end of the nineteenth century, with a great and varied mass of twentieth-century music in addition. The live music, I say; he was not the kind of scholar who is interested in a fact simply as a fact, and about dead music he did not worry. . . . He was not interested in composers' biographies: he knew Beethoven's works backwards, but cared nothing for his life—and cared nothing for attempts to correlate his music with the French Revolution." Tovey's prodigious knowledge and scholarship, in other words, were not those of the musicology that has descended heavily and alarmingly on our musical life. He concerned himself not with matters like *Dissonance in Early Polyphony up to Tinctoris* but with Mozart's concertos and Haydn's symphonies; he discussed them not as documents in cultural history but as works of art to be experienced as works of art; and when he poked his head in among their notes he was impelled by an intense love and enthusiasm and understanding for music that made warm and alive and excitingly significant the technical minutiae he emerged with triumphantly.

One must regret that these lectures were not delivered here, and that Tovey was not brought here to do at an American university the extraordinary work he did at the University of Edinburgh. He visited this country about fourteen years ago, and announced a second visit for the next year which did not come off; and in 1934, when I was looking for some way of getting machinery in motion to bring him here, someone arranged a meeting with the head of one of our musical institutions who was, as he still is, a power in the musico-political

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world and, as such, in the group that was bringing European scholars to this country. Yes, he said coldly, he knew about Tovey; but there were greater scholars in Europe than Tovey. Did I know of Professor A of the University of X who had written about the use of a certain cadence in the eleventh century? Did I know of Professor B of the University of Y who had written about the use of something else in the twelfth century? Did I know of Professor C who had written about the use of something else again in the thirteenth century? These were the men whom he was interested in bringing here, and who eventually were brought over. There were good reasons for bringing them: what musicology may find to say about the relation of Mozart's G minor Symphony to other music and to the culture of its period has its interest, its value. But not—for me—the interest and value of the symphony itself experienced as a work of art for and by itself. And for me, therefore, there were better reasons for bringing over Tovey.

December 20, 1941

Not least interesting at Toscanini's November 15 concert with the Philadelphia Orchestra was its human aspect. Of the three great eastern orchestras this one may have the best personnel, and certainly is the most engaging in its appearance of youthful alertness and pride—on the occasions, I should add, when it plays under a conductor who gives it cause for alertness and pride. There are men in the orchestra who are good enough musicians to appreciate the flaws in Stokowski's musicianship; but as players in an orchestra they cannot be blamed for worshipping a man whose extraordinary powers as an orchestral conductor—the power, above all, over the minds and bodies of a hundred men—lift the mere process of playing from dull routine to exciting experience. And at this concert the awe on the face of the young first-desk cellist as he looked up from his notes to Toscanini throughout the performance of Schubert's C major Symphony, the smiles of the older men at the end of the per-

formance, were evidence of what it meant to them merely to be playing again under a great conductor—a man who could make use of their capacities, who knew what he wanted and how to get it and would not accept anything less—to say nothing of what it meant to be playing under a great conductor who was also a great musician.

At this concert the orchestra did not produce the lush sumptuousness and splendor of sound that were characteristic of its performances under Stokowski: playing under Toscanini it produced the equally characteristic Toscanini vocabulary—with its sharp contours of individual sounds and of phrases, its transparency of textures, its unfailing continuity and perfect plastic proportions of the continuum of sound progressing in time. And these things, as he produced them with this orchestra, were marvelously beautiful, even if without the miraculous subtleties of color and inflection that he was able to get from the New York Philharmonic after conducting it for ten years, and that can be heard in the recording of Rossini's *Semiramide* Overture. It is with this vocabulary of tone and style that Toscanini expresses his feeling for a work; and with it he created in Philadelphia a living form of Schubert's symphony which embodies what this great work means for him—a form in which it has its greatest meaning for me.

Toscanini's performance of the Schubert symphony is not universally accepted; and what is most criticized—not only by the German musicians in our midst but by Americans—is his unusually fast pace for the second movement. Invariably I am startled by the first measures, and then go along easily with the rest of the movement; but at the Philadelphia performance I thought I understood what was behind that fast pace: the feeling for purity—that is, simplicity, economy, subtlety—of style, which leads him often to set a single, subtly modeled tempo for an entire movement, and which in this instance leads him to set a single pace not only for the opening section of the second movement and for the alternating section but for the catastrophe in the middle of the movement, so that the increas-

ing urgency of this passage is achieved, powerfully, without any acceleration, and only a slight broadening at the end is sufficient to give shattering power to the chords with which the passage breaks off into silence.

"Toscanini's performances of Beethoven are not in the Viennese tradition," said a German conductor to me, as though this disposed of them; and no doubt he would dispose of the Schubert performance in the same way. But what is the Viennese tradition, and what is its authority? If Beethoven himself had conducted performances of his symphonies which had been models for Viennese conductors who had heard them and whose performances were in turn models for others down to the present day, we would have an authoritative Viennese tradition. Or would we? I have listened to Stokowski's early recordings of certain works and then to his later recordings of them, and heard the changes that a few years could produce in the same conductor's treatment of the same works; I observed, in the course of a dozen years, the increasing breadth and weight of Toscanini's performances of Beethoven and Brahms; and after all this I cannot believe that what Beethoven did with a symphony could have the slightest connection, by way of what a hundred other conductors did in the intervening hundred years, with a performance of the symphony in Vienna today. Actually, however, Beethoven established no such models: because of his deafness and the quality of the orchestras the performances of his symphonies in Vienna during his lifetime were very poor; and the better performances of later years had no authority beyond the better understanding of the works which better conductors and musicians achieved from their own study of them—no more authority, that is, than Toscanini's performances have today. For some the models may have been Wagner's performances; but Wagner has told us of the chaos that was presented as Beethoven's Ninth at the Leipzig Gewandhaus in the 1820's; he has told us that the first performance he heard which gave the work the sense he had himself got from reading the score was that of Habeneck with the Paris Conservatory Orchestra,

and that this sense was merely one they had had to discover in the work by their long, patient study of it in rehearsals for the performance. Did their performance establish a tradition which could forbid other musicians—which today could forbid one of the greatest musicians of all time—to do the same thing?

As for Schubert's C major, it was performed in Vienna only shortly after his death;* then it was forgotten until Schumann discovered it in 1838 and Mendelssohn played it in Leipzig in 1839. Did that establish a Viennese tradition—or any other—which can forbid Toscanini's performance today?

January 17, 1942

Two readers have objected to my high estimate of Virgil Thomson's music criticism. They are New York Philharmonic subscribers who have been tearing up their tickets for the Mitropoulos programs of contemporary music which Mr. Thomson has been urging on the Philharmonic directors as the only thing that will give their orchestra a secure place in the intellectual life of the city and nation. And when Mr. Thomson tells these readers that the music of 150 years ago which they are deeply affected by is really as incomprehensible to them as the painting and literature of the past because it was produced by men "whose modes of thought and attitudes of passion were . . . different from ours," and that they can really understand only the contemporary music which they dislike, since it is the product of the processes of thought and feeling of their own time—when Mr. Thomson does this, he drives these two read-

* [1948] Many of the present-day traditions in the performance of Brahms go back to the performances conducted by Richter and others in Brahms's lifetime and in his very presence; and what, then, could be more authoritative. But Rosé, the old concert-master of the Vienna Philharmonic, once told Toscanini that at those performances one could see Brahms sometimes shaking his head in disapproval. It's as though the mangled tempos of Koussevitzky's recorded performance of Copland's *Appalachian Spring*—which Copland had to endure if he wanted Koussevitzky to play the work—were to be considered authoritative fifty years from now.

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ers to a violent denunciation of writing in which they insist he has his eye not on his subject but on the audience which he wants to impress and shock with his cleverness, his perversity, his daring. And from this they go on to the other things which they claim to detect in the writing—the special pleading for causes in which he is not disinterested, the personal friendships and animosities, and other such motivations.

These readers attack in Mr. Thomson the things which deflect or corrupt a critic's judgment; what I value is his judgment when it is not deflected or corrupted. That is the distinction one has to make constantly. The late William J. Henderson wrote about Walter Damrosch with loyalty to a friend; he wrote about Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic with an old man's crotchety notion about prima donna conductors; but at other times his competence, honesty, and vigor produced some of the best writing on music of his day. Today Mr. Thomson may evaluate a book with graciousness to a fellow-member of his Critics' Circle; or as a composer he may tell the New York Philharmonic directors that the only way to give their orchestra a place in the life of the American public is to have it embark on a five-year devotion to the music of contemporary composers, which I suspect would leave the orchestra without an audience after one year; but about music and performances he often writes with exciting penetration (often, I say, not always).

Whenever I write anything of this sort there is someone who asks: "Isn't it the business of a music critic to criticize music? Why, then, do you criticize criticism and critics? Why do you, when other critics don't?" It is true that the others don't; and this has given people the idea that no critic should. But many years ago Bernard Shaw, who wrote some of the finest music criticism I have ever read, observed that "musical criticisms, like sermons, are of low average quality simply because they are never discussed or contradicted," and advocated the formation of "a Vigilance Committee of musicians for the exposure of incompetent critics." He did this because he considered good criticism important; and good criticism was important for him

because music was important. And those are my reasons—for reading criticism, for being concerned about it, for getting enthusiastic about Shaw, Tovey, Turner, even Thomson, for getting angry about some of the others.

Shaw not only believed that criticism should be discussed, but himself acted on his belief; and scattered through the brilliant volumes of *London Music in 1888-1889*⁵² and *Music in London 1890-1894*⁵³ are paragraphs on the subject that are pertinent to the criticism of today. Thus, the proposal to form a critics' club elicited the statement that "clearly a critic should not belong to a club at all. He should not know anybody: his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against his." And explaining why one of the London critics was disliked and attacked by the others, he wrote:

He has the force to write individually, originally, making his mark with every opinion he delivers. Of how many critics in London is it possible to say as much? When one thinks of the average critic, with his feeble infusion of musical dictionary and analytical program, the man who has no opinion, and dare not express it if he had, who is afraid of his friends, his enemies, of his editor, of his own ignorance, of committing an injustice (as if there were any question of abstract justice involved in the expression of a critic's tastes and distastes), it is impossible not to admire L. E., who, at an age at which all ordinary journalists are hopelessly muzzled by the mere mass of their personal acquaintance, can still excite these wild animosities in the breasts of his colleagues.

February 14, 1942

Aaron Copland's writing is fluent but not orderly or precise—which makes it difficult to deal with. As I understand the opening paragraph of his book *Our New Music*,¹² he thinks that the lay listener has been antagonistic or apathetic to recent music because its new styles and tendencies have bewildered him, and that they have bewildered him because he has not known how

and why and out of what they have developed. Mr. Copland, then, undertakes to inform this listener of the "change in expressive ideal" and the extension of vocabulary that produced modern music; and he does this to remove from the listener's mind the "fantastic notions . . . concerning the nature of so-called 'modern music' " which "incredible as it may seem . . . are still being circulated by newspaper writers and radio commentators who ought to know better"—to remove, that is, the notions that the music lacks emotion and melody, is rhythmically over-complicated and harmonically cacophonous—and to enable the listener to recognize the emotion that is merely changed in quality and intensity, the melody, rhythm, and harmony that are merely enriched. And as I understand him, Mr. Copland believes that when the listener recognizes in modern music "the expression in terms of an enriched musical language of a new spirit of objectivity, attuned to our own times . . . the music of the composer of today—in other words—*our* music," he will find this music as significant, interesting, and valuable as listeners fifty and a hundred years ago found *their* music.

Lay readers of Mr. Copland's book who have actually heard Schönberg, Bartók, von Webern, and the other modern extremists may be amused by his reference to "an enriched musical language," and his wide-eyed incredible-as-it-may-seem, how-can-such-things-be talk about the "fantastic notions" with which newspaper writers, apparently for the sheer hell of it, have misrepresented the music; or they may be irritated by all this; but they won't be fooled by it. For they will know that those newspaper writers have described what is plain to hear in the music. Even these readers may, however, accept Mr. Copland's contention that when they understand the aesthetic and procedures of the music they will be able to hear in it the value they have not heard. And if my experience means anything that contention is wrong. At the same time as I began to listen to the music, after the last war, with mind and ears that were open, receptive, eager, I began to read discussions and explanations of it, in the hope that with them I would perceive the new

artistic beauty or potency in what impressed me as hideous or feeble; but nothing I have learned from reading about Schönberg, Bartók, and the rest in the past twenty years has changed the impression I have got from listening to them.

Nor is it different with Mr. Copland's book. A reader who learns from it that there *is* emotion in Schönberg's music may find that he doesn't like the emotion or the music it is communicated in. He may learn that the emotion and the vocabulary it utilizes make the music "ours," and discover that what is "ours" is impressive and valuable to him when it is Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* or Bloch's Quintet or Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1—to say nothing of Picasso's *Guernica* studies and post-scripts—but not when it is Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*.

Mr. Copland's treatment of the American part of his subject is also open to objection; but this requires more time and space than I have left now.*

March 7, 1942

Among the things attractive enough to get me to stand the annoyances of the concert-hall was the Dessoff Choirs' Lassus program. I could hear only the first half; and some of the music—the motet *Timor et tremor*, and two of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*—turned out to be magnificent in sound and powerful in effect; but some of it—the three motets for two voices—struck me as pretty dull. Mr. Boepple would probably contend that if I knew the two-part motets as well as he I would find them as interesting as he does; but I think the value he finds in them is the excessive value that people who saturate themselves in a composer sometimes find in even the least consequential of his products—the dullest two-part invention of a Bach, or two-part motet of a Lassus.

The performance of *Carmen* that Beecham conducted at the Metropolitan I heard over the air; and so all my attention

*I never had time or space thereafter.

MARCH 7, 1942

was given to what interested me most—the music. For a time the experience of hearing the shabby and battered phrases given sharpness and brightness and liveness was exciting; but after an hour of the unrelenting fast pace I began—as did the music, the singers—to beg for relief, for a chance to relax, to breathe.

On this occasion I got an earful of what is broadcast from the Metropolitan during intermissions. The broadcasts I heard in Salzburg in 1937 seemed to be based on the belief that there were people outside the Festspielhaus who were as interested in the music as the people inside, that they were listening to the broadcasts for that reason, and that they wanted and should be given over the air the information about the performance that the Festspielhaus audience got from the printed program—namely the cast of performers, which was all that was broadcast. The British Broadcasting Corporation used to provide additional information about opera broadcasts in its publications; and I believe it also published cheap librettos that made it possible for the radio audience to follow every word and action. When you have given the cast and the libretto you have given everything an interested listener needs to understand and enjoy the performance; and if you believe he is interested, that is all you will give him. But that is something which the people who run American broadcasting do not believe: music doesn't genuinely interest most of them, and so they can't believe it interests anyone else. What impresses them, what they think will impress the public, and what therefore they broadcast is not music but the prestige-value of the word "music," the name "Toscanini," "New York Philharmonic-Symphony," "Metropolitan Opera." And so at least one plan for publishing and distributing librettos that I heard about (consider how easy it would be to distribute them through Texaco's outlets all over the country) was turned down;* and aside from the few minutes in which the

*The man who acted as intermediary got as far as N.B.C.'s musical counsel, Samuel Chotzinoff, and was disposed of with a couple of characteristic sneers—the question what the man expected to get out of the project for himself, and the comment that the suggestion had already been made forty times before.

story of the next act is told by the unctuous Milton Cross, the intermissions are filled with all the rubbish that is considered necessary to hold the radio listener's interest. The day I listened this included Mr. Cross's minute-by-minute description of the awesome scene in the Metropolitan, someone else's lengthy salute to Seattle as a music-center, Lucrezia Bori interviewing Rosa Ponselle, and a quiz, in the course of which Mr. Richard Simon of Simon and Schuster, answering the question what opera one should hear at one's first visit to the Metropolitan, thought it should be an opera that had schmaltz (which Mr. Robert Lawrence * later changed to "melody" under cover of a "seriously"), and specifically suggested *Pagliacci*.

At Toscanini's broadcasts with the N.B.C. Symphony for the Treasury Department's defense bond campaign Deems Taylor, of all people, has been the commentator, and as such has made highly complimentary references to Toscanini. I say "of all people" because a few years ago, when Columbia Broadcasting System was trying as hard as the New York Philharmonic to make Barbirolli look big, Mr. Taylor contributed a build-up of Barbirolli that knifed Toscanini. Saying this one year, saying complimentary things about Toscanini another year—it's all in the day's work for Mr. Taylor. But I would expect some other people to recognize that one man who should not be the commentator for Toscanini's broadcasts is Deems Taylor.

March 14, 1942

One of the season's great occasions was the February 21 recital at which Landowska played in New York for the first time in many years. As she sat at the harpsichord waiting to begin Bach's *Goldberg Variations* the noise in Town Hall died out into an absolute silence which I cannot recall ever having experienced before at a concert. It was the breathless silence of expectation, and then—as she played the opening aria—of expectation ful-

* At this time on the music staff of the New York *Herald Tribune*.

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filled. Compared with the statement of the aria in the performance that Landowska put on records some years ago this one was more spaciouly elaborated in greater detail—detail which was more richly inflected, now with power, now with subtlety, and always with extraordinary rhythmic continuity. These qualities of phrasing, together with the masterly use of the instrument's tonal resources, imparted exciting life even to some of the more mechanical examples of the variation process that followed; and they made the spacious statements of the wonderful slow variations in minor mode, the affecting restatement of the aria at the end, overwhelming.

Another great occasion was the February 10 concert of Toscanini and the Philadelphia Orchestra in New York. I had heard the concert in Philadelphia—had heard, that is, Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony, Berlioz's *Queen Mab*, Debussy's *La Mer* in performances in which three of Toscanini's finest interpretive conceptions were beautifully realized in sound. These performances were repeated in New York—after a few days in which conductor and orchestra had continued to work together intensively in recording sessions, and in Carnegie Hall which is acoustically even finer than the Academy of Music. And merely as sounds produced by a conductor with an orchestra those February 10 performances ranged themselves with the other wonders of our age that have been achieved by human powers in Carnegie Hall—the sounds produced by Stokowski with the Philadelphia Orchestra, by Koussevitzky with the Boston Symphony, by Toscanini with the New York Philharmonic. But they were not, of course, mere sounds; they were a vocabulary with which Toscanini expressed his understanding, his feeling for the music; and the living forms in sound which he created that night were the truest statements of what the works were and what they meant that I had ever experienced—statements which ranged themselves only with Toscanini's own previous statements, whose truth they intensified. One reason for the impression of rightness conveyed at every point in the progression of, say, the first movement of

Tchaikovsky's symphony, was the actual plastic coherence of the form produced by Toscanini's unfailing sense for continuity and proportion in the continuum of sound moving in time; and another was the fact that the nuances of sonority and pace with which this continuum was being molded were the ones Tchaikovsky specified in his score to produce the form he had imagined.

This brings us to the matter of fidelity to the printed score. One American critic likes to contend that the composer does not create music at all, but only makes diagrams for the performer who is the real creator of the music. He might as well contend that *Hamlet* was created not by Shakespeare who wrote it but by the actors who have performed it. The composer does create the complete detailed form in sound in his mind, and his notations are intended to convey this imagined form to the performer, whose function is to produce the form in living sound. Actually the notations cannot convey the imagined form adequately, and the performer therefore cannot produce it entirely as the composer imagined it; but this does not free him from the obligation to produce it to the extent to which the notations do convey it. About halfway through the first movement of Debussy's *La Mer*, after the music has died down into mutterings of basses and kettledrum, an upward leap of the cellos is followed by a slight swell of the kettledrum from *pp* to *p* and back, and this by an echoing swell of the horns. Debussy can write *pp* and *p*; but there is no notation with which he can convey exactly what he heard as *pp* and *p*; nor can he convey exactly what he imagined as the timbres of the horns. His notation, then, leaves room for the differences between Toscanini's values for *pp* and *p* and Koussevitzky's, the sound of Toscanini's horns and Koussevitzky's (to say nothing of Barbirolli or Mitropoulos); but it leaves no room for Koussevitzky's change of the swell of kettledrum followed by echoing swell of horns, to the simultaneous, thunderous swell of kettledrum *and* horns that can be heard in his recorded performance. For Koussevitzky a person who wants the composer's score adhered to does not

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want the music to be alive (the words are his). But it is Toscanini who, obeying Debussy's directions, gives life to the magical effect of horns echoing over the water; and it is Koussevitzky who, by his change, kills that effect.

Bach, Haydn, Mozart, even Beethoven give fewer directions than Tchaikovsky and Debussy; but the works have implied plastic requirements; and here again Toscanini—with his sense for form as a medium of feeling—succeeds where Koussevitzky—with his tendency to over-intensify contours and over-expand structural proportions in order to over-convey content—fails.

April 25, 1942

By the evidence of the *Scythian* Suite, which Koussevitzky performed in New York on March 12, Prokofiev wrote better music under the czarist regime that he satirizes in *Kije*. In *Kije* technical expertness is grinding it out by formula; in the *Scythian* Suite a youthful fulness of imagination and of musical powers produces some pages that fall short of the mark and others that hit it with magnificent success. In this music about pagan Scythia I heard things which suggested the possibility that Prokofiev in 1914 had heard or knew the music about pagan Russia that Stravinsky had completed the year before. These things, however, if they did represent an external influence, were made part of a personal and individual way of writing; whereas what struck me more forcibly as I listened was the fact that a lot of Shostakovitch is a pretentiously expansive and diffuse reworking of the compact and sharply defined writing of Prokofiev.

Koussevitzky's stunning performance of this Prokofiev piece represented his complete understanding of it; but while the fabulously beautiful sound and finish of the Boston Symphony's playing in Mozart's Symphony K.551 (the so-called *Jupiter*) provided evidence of Koussevitzky's virtuosity as a conductor, his insufficient understanding of the music was made clear in the excessively fast tempo that robbed the first movement of its

majesty and force, the distention of the *Andante cantabile* second movement into a *Largo*, the phrasing that avoided the plastic distortion which Koussevitzky is often guilty of, but that was a mere playing of the notes with fabulous beauty of sound and finish, as against the sharply contoured inflection with which Beecham gives Mozart's phrases character and meaning. It was interesting to hear this performance, with its striking contrast to Beecham's spaciously elaborating and deeply probing treatment of Mozart, after reading statements * about Koussevitzky's copying of Beecham performances—almost as interesting as it had been to hear the striking contrast between the alleged Koussevitzky copies and the alleged Beecham originals. Try to imagine a conductor listening to another conductor's performance and wanting to do anything but show what a different and superior performance *he* can give; better still, try listening to the Koussevitzky and Beecham performances of K.338 on records.

May 2, 1942

Dr. Alfred Einstein is the musicologist to whose disciplined scholarship we owe the new edition of Köchel's catalogue²⁶ and the editions of the resurrected Haydn symphonies that Stiedry performed with the New Friends of Music Orchestra. In *Greatness in Music*¹⁵ he is a scholar writing not for other scholars but for the lay reader; which means, as he puts it, writing with "no long preliminary research, no copious scientific equipment, and no learned annotations," or, as I would put it, giving only the essential train of thought and its necessary factual basis, without all the cluttering, obscuring detail of supporting reasoning and fact required in a rigorous presentation for other scholars.

Actually one finds Dr. Einstein on page 126, for example, reaching "the difference between genius and talent, which in music as in other things is not a quantitative but a qualitative

* In Kolodin's *Guide to Recorded Music*.²⁷

difference"; on page 129 describing the difference as "condensation, which is related to brevity but is not identical with it," and which is "a stronger vitalization through musical energy and expression"; and then giving examples. First Telemann and Bach, between whom the difference turns out to be that when Telemann wrote in the French or the Italian style "there was always a residue of imitation," whereas "when Bach wrote a concerto *im italienischen Gusto* it was Bachian or, as has been incorrectly said, German. For it was not his so-called Germanism that determined Bach's style; rather it was Bach's music that determined the German style. A national style is the sum of the individualities of speech that can be drawn from the work of musicians—but sometimes *cannot* be drawn from it; for if Bach is German, then the Wagner of *Tristan* or *Parsifal* is definitely not very German. Bach just is Bachian, and Wagner Wagnerian"—all of which may be true, if not very clear, but Dr. Einstein is supposedly discussing condensation.

But on page 130 "the process of condensation becomes very clear when we compare Mozart with his Italian contemporaries. 'Mozart and Cimarosa'—that doesn't go, even if Stendhal believed it did. Berlioz was absolutely right when in an annotation to his memoirs of this corpulent consul at Civitavecchia he said that he 'wrote the most irritating lucubrations on music, for which he fancied he had some feeling.' Mozart had the good fortune—and merit—to have captured . . . some of the best librettos which Italian opera of those days afforded. But not the very best. The very best *opera buffa* librettos . . . were not written by Da Ponte but by Giovanni Battista Casti, his rival, who unfortunately plays about the same role in the history of Italian literature of the eighteenth century as Pietro Aretino did in the sixteenth. He wrote a number of *novelle galanti* which are as salacious as they are witty—but, after all, perhaps more witty than salacious. Byron must have known them and admired them; otherwise we should hardly have his *Don Juan*. Goethe"—and so on until on page 133 we reach the fact that Casti's *Rè Teodoro*, the best libretto of its time, was set to mu-

sic not by Mozart but by Paesiello, whose opera would be a failure today because "it lacks what we have called 'condensation.' Paesiello said everything in a broader and a more shallow way than Mozart."

Note that the essential line of thought is: "Condensation is the difference between Mozart and his contemporaries. Cimarosa is one example. Paesiello is a second: though he started with a libretto by Casti that was even better than Da Ponte's librettos for Mozart, he produced an opera that was inferior to Mozart's because it lacked condensation." Note that just as Dr. Einstein could not cite the example of Telemann and Bach without bringing in what he thinks about a national German style, so he cannot cite the example of Cimarosa and Mozart without mentioning what he read in Stendhal about Cimarosa, and in Berlioz about "this corpulent consul at Civitavecchia." Note further that from this he goes to Mozart's librettos without a word to indicate that he has moved on from Cimarosa to Paesiello; and that we are left in the dark about the purpose of the comparison of Da Ponte's and Casti's librettos—that is, its relation to the real point, which is the comparison of Mozart's and Paesiello's operas—for two pages in which Dr. Einstein again, having mentioned Casti's librettos, must drag in what he has dug up about Casti, about Pietro Aretino, about the *novelle galanti* which Byron must have known and admired, and so on.

The book, then—for it is all like that—is filled with the details that are properly in a book for scholars, but not properly in a book for lay readers. And the reason is that if the book is written informally it is also written pretentiously, and that actually the informality is part of the pretentiousness: Dr. Einstein never lets his lay reader forget that it is a scholar who is writing for him—or rather who is condescending to write for him—out of the riches of his enormous scholarship, his long experience, his vast reading, his profound philosophical meditations. Moreover, writing informally, for our scholar, means writing with

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his scholar's discipline relaxed below the requirements of even an informal intellectual exercise. Even such an exercise, that is, must have organization, order, form; but Dr. Einstein has taken the informality of the occasion as an excuse for shirking this burdensome obligation to integrate the material of each chapter into a coherent, clearly outlined progression, the four chapters into a unified treatment of the book's subject; he has taken it as an excuse for producing instead the four *causeries* such as are given on the lecture circuit—each with its impressive rather than descriptive title, each playing with the material, and each a confused clutter through which in some instances one can penetrate to outline and direction, and in other instances one cannot.

A number of passages in the book I cannot make head or tail of; some that I understand I don't think much of; others I find richly informative and perceptive; but even with these the book is for me—who approached it with respect for its author and eager anticipation of what I would learn from him about an important and interesting subject—a shocking performance. And the performance being what it is, one can understand and forgive the satisfaction I got from seeing the author, right in the middle of all this pretentiousness, slip on a banana peel—refer, that is, on page 120 to Mozart's "two 'little' symphonies in A major and G minor (Köchel Nos. 200 and 201)," when actually K.200 is in C major, K.201 is in A major, and the "little" G minor is K.183.

May 30, 1942

Virgil Thomson's discussion of three chapters in *Radio Research*, 1941,³¹ edited by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton, led me to get the book and read the chapters myself. The book comprises six studies of the relations of broadcasts and listeners—studies "directed from Columbia University's Office of Radio Research, financed by a grant of Rockefeller funds"; studies through which "the social scientist may help to contribute toward

a more constructive use of radio." And three of the six deal with music.

The Popular Music Industry, by Duncan MacDougald, Jr., describes how popular songs are produced and how they are promoted by intensive "plugging" over the air. Edgar A. Suchman's *Invitation to Music* is a "study of the creation of new music listeners by the radio," which is interesting though blurred by poorly ordered thought, unprecise writing, and the social scientist's jargon—one of the findings about the new listeners being that "signs of real understanding are lacking . . . Music is listened to for romantic relaxation or excitement, without any concern for the development or the relations of the music."

"Further discussion of listless listening, which would seem to be the only radio kind that is possible," says Thomson, "is offered in T. W. Adorno's analysis of the 'radio symphony.'" But the Suchman report doesn't demonstrate that listless listening is "the only radio kind that is possible"; and I find it difficult to write temperately about the motivation, the method, the results of the Adorno performance—of the aggressive ostentation and triumphant assurance in the display of his powers that leap out at one from his use of one of the methods of the German system-grinders and concept-spinners to produce the conclusions that Thomson welcomes "with cries of joy": a method of demonstration by translation, which subjects an initial statement of fact to step-by-step verbal and conceptual translation into statements with new meanings which become increasingly remote from fact, and which in the present instance rise in a crescendo to a climax of triumphant ferocity in musico-sociopsychological concept and jargon.

The fact that Adorno starts with is radio's imperfect transmission of dynamics and color in orchestral performance; and his first step is to make of this the contention that the meaning of a Beethoven symphony movement "automatically shifts from the totality to the individual moments [since] their interrelation and articulation by dynamics and colors is no longer fully ef-

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fectured"—which is false, since the amount by which the interrelations are not "fully" effected by the imperfect dynamics and colors is not such as to produce complete discontinuities in the progression of musical thought (the discontinuities that *are* produced by lapses of attention in the concert hall). Then, by successive steps, "the symphonic particulars become atoms"; this causes the elements of the movement to acquire the character of mere quotations, and the radio symphony to appear "as a medley or potpourri in so far as the musical atoms it offers up acquire the touch of having been picked up somewhere else and put together in a kind of montage"; the isolated detail acquires more weight, more importance, more expressiveness than it had in its context, and so radio not only atomizes and trivializes the music but romanticizes it; these changes in the movement's essential structure mean "not only that this structure is not adequately conveyed but that what does come out opposes that structure and constitutes a serious obstacle against its realization"; radio transmission provides an "exact and objective technical foundation" for "the tendency toward atomistic listening" and "prejudices the capacity to listen in a spontaneous and conscious way," forcing listeners "to passive sensual and emotional acceptance of predigested yet disconnected qualities, whereas those qualities at the same time become mummified and magicized." And more of the same.

The alarming thing is that the matter goes further than this chapter. It isn't only Thomson who utters cries of welcome; Adorno's tripe is the sort of thing that social science research institutes, foundations, and journals go for. He is, we are told, "associated with the Institute for Social Research at Columbia University" and "has been in charge of the music research at the Office of Radio Research"; his influence in this research, his status and power are attested by the other writers' genuflections to his suggestions, ideas, and writings:* even MacDougald

* [1948] There are many such genuflections in Hanns Eisler's *Composing for the Films*, which the author describes as "an outcome of the Film Music Project of the New School for Social Research, financed by the Rockefeller

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cannot mention the song publisher's dictation to the song writer without a "Cf. T. W. Adorno, *The Fetish Character of Music and the Retrogression of Listening*, [in] *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, Vol. 7, 1938, p. 336."

And the matter goes further than Adorno. But that will have to wait.

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New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art put on a special show of Rembrandt's paintings and etchings during the past winter; and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Society, which has the same function in relation to music as the Metropolitan has to the plastic arts, put on a special six-concert show of Beethoven's nine symphonies, his *Missa Solemnis*, several of his overtures, and the *Triple Concerto*. Since a piece of music, unlike a painting, must be ever newly created as a form in living sound, the special character of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society's Beethoven show consisted partly in its choice of Toscanini to create the forms of Beethoven's works for the six concerts. And the choice was justified by the plastic beauty, the emotional significance and power of the forms he produced.

Though the concerts were interesting primarily for their presentations of Beethoven's works, they were interesting incidentally for other things. Involved in the presentations was the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, to which, in the ten or more seasons that he had conducted it, Toscanini had given a discipline, a sound, a style as distinctive as those of the Philadelphia Orchestra when conducted by Stokowski, or of the Boston Symphony when conducted by Koussevitzky. This discipline, sound, and style had departed from the orchestra when he had departed in 1936; and it was interesting to note their

Foundation"; and his thinking and writing confirm his statement that "the theories and formulations presented here evolved from co-operation with [Adorno] on general aesthetic and sociological matters as well as purely musical issues."

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return with him at these Beethoven concerts. One would have supposed they had returned only after laborious inch-by-inch rehearsal; but actually nothing at the concerts was more breathtaking than what happened at the first moments of the first rehearsal, when Toscanini, with no preliminaries, simply began to conduct the orchestra for the first time after six years, and the orchestra began at once to play as though the interval had been only one day—when, that is, he began to convey his wishes through those largely molding movements of the right arm, those subtly inflecting movements of the left hand, and the orchestra began to produce the razor-edge attacks, the radiant and beautifully shaped sonorities, the sharply contoured phrases, the transparent textures of balanced woodwinds or strings which those movements had elicited in April, 1936. For minutes at a time he continued to conduct and the orchestra continued to play in this way; only after such long stretches were there halts to go back and correct an imperfect balance, an unprecise rhythm, a wrong accent at one point, or to work out the contour of a phrase at another; and at the end of one early rehearsal he turned to the finale of the First Symphony and, leading the orchestra through it without interruption, produced the performance of six or seven years ago in all its marvelously perfected detail.

The explanation of this is to be found partly—but only partly—in the fact that Toscanini carries the specific gifts for conducting—the ear for orchestral precision and sonority, the personal force and technique with which to achieve what the ear demands—to the point of sheer virtuosity to which they are carried by only two other men, Stokowski and Koussevitzky; that at these rehearsals he was dealing with an orchestra which he had in ten years made as phenomenally sensitized to his direction as the Philadelphia to Stokowski's, the Boston Symphony to Koussevitzky's—so sensitized as to be able to respond again to this direction after an interval of six years; and that he was conducting this orchestra in works which they had rehearsed and performed together a number of times. But the explanation is

to be found also in the nature of Toscanini's musical conceptions—the unfailing plastic continuity and coherence of the shapes he creates in sound moving in time. In such a progression the timing and force of one sound implies the timing and force of the next almost irresistibly; and it is the power of these implications, causing the many players in the orchestra to produce the next sound at the same point in time and with the right weight and color, that is partly responsible for the remarkable precision in Toscanini's performances, the extraordinary things the New York Philharmonic did at the first rehearsal.

Toscanini's feeling for the time element in the musical sound-time continuum is extraordinary; and its manifestations—in the choice of a tempo, in its subtle inflection, in its distention with increasing tension in the music, in the maintenance of proportion between successive tempos—are among the most distinctive characteristics of his performances. One hears, in the *Missa Solemnis*, the rightness of the pace of the *Benedictus* for the blessedness which the music is concerned with, and looking at the score one discovers that the pace is exactly the *Andante molto cantabile e non troppo mosso* which Beethoven prescribes; but Toscanini did not get his pace from this direction—he heard it in the music: with the same printed direction, but with not the same musical discernment, Koussevitzky causes the *Benedictus* to move at an *Andante* so *troppo mosso* as to be an *Allegretto*. Nor is it Beethoven's directions for the various parts of the *Gloria* or the *Credo* that give Toscanini the mutually related tempos which bind the parts into a continuous, coherent progression: with the same directions Koussevitzky produces awkward discontinuities. Again, though it is Beethoven who gives only one direction for the entire second movement of the *Seventh Symphony*, the entire *Funeral March of the Eroica*, it is the necessities of Toscanini's own understanding of the music that cause him alone to establish a single unifying tempo for the various sections of the movement. And with no directions at all from Beethoven it is such necessities that produce the subtle inflection of this single tempo, the distentions that build up the

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fugato section of the Funeral March to a climax of shattering power.

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A revised edition has been published of Rimsky-Korsakov's *My Musical Life*.⁴⁷ The book does not give the complete, objective history of the period of the flowering of Russian music that a scholar may construct some day from all available materials, including this autobiography. But it has the special fascination of the personal immediacy of an account by one who himself knew the men and participated in the events of the period.

What I have found especially interesting in the book is the material that has enabled me to understand how Rimsky-Korsakov was led to do what he did with Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. A footnote gives Jean Marnold's much-quoted description of the revision: "The scene of Boris with his children is especially mutilated. Rimsky-Korsakov cuts . . . one, two, or three measures as serenely as he cuts fifteen or twenty. At will he transposes a tone, or a half-tone, makes sharps or flats natural, alters modulations. He even corrects the harmony. During the tableau in the cell of Pimyen the liturgical Dorian mode is adulterated by a banal D minor. The interval of the augmented fifth (a favorite device of Musorgsky) is frequently the object of his equilateral ostracism. . . . From one end of the work to the other he planes, files, polishes, pulls together, retouches, embellishes, makes insipid, or corrupts. . . ." Imagine the analogous things being done to a painting, to a poem: you will see what violation of the integrity of another artist's work Rimsky-Korsakov committed; you will see also that it was one which no painter, no poet would commit or be allowed to commit.

The explanation of Rimsky-Korsakov's act begins in his description of the Balakirev circle. Balakirev, a brilliant musician and perceptive critic with gifts and experience that compensated for lack of formal schooling, and with a magnetic personality, dominated the others: from him Cui, Musorgsky, Rimsky-Kor-

sakov, and Borodin acquired their tastes in music; to him they brought their essays in composition, to be told how and how not to proceed; from him they got their attitude toward the craft of composition—that “there was no need of training: one must begin to compose outright, to create and learn through one’s own work of creation.” The error in this for them was that they had not had his long experience as a practicing musician to develop their talents. As it worked out, what was technically unskilful in their work he corrected, what remained unfinished he did for them; only in this way was the piece made ready for performance or publication. And in addition to receiving criticism and help from Balakirev they criticized and helped each other.

From the start, then, there was this practice of mutual aid in composition; and later Rimsky-Korsakov’s criticisms and suggestions to Borodin and Musorgsky acquired additional authority, in his own mind, from the professional training that he gave himself and the professional positions that he occupied. The composer of the symphonic works *Sadko* and *Antar* and the opera *Maid of Pskov* was appointed professor of practical composition at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and thought it necessary to know as much about harmony and counterpoint as his pupils; also, after he had exhausted the few devices he had used in those works “only the development of a technique . . . permitted new living currents to flow into my creative work”; and so he acquired a disciplined craftsmanship that enabled him to be steadily productive. The composers of the B minor Symphony and *Boris Godunov*, on the other hand—without the schooling and discipline in composition for which they continued to express scorn, and with increasing disorganization in their daily lives—were able to compose only mere bits of *Prince Igor* and *Khovanchina*. And it was Rimsky-Korsakov now, with Balakirev withdrawn from the musical world, who did what Balakirev had done. When Rimsky-Korsakov wished to perform excerpts from *Prince Igor* which he could not get Borodin to finish orchestrating, he and Lyadov had to help Borodin do the

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job in one evening. For another concert he had to orchestrate the *Persian Dance* from *Khovanchina* for Musorgsky, who, he says, "was quite pleased with my work, although I had made many corrections in his harmonies and part-writing."

From this the next step was to complete the works when Borodin and Musorgsky died leaving them collections of composed fragments, partly composed sketches, merely projected ideas. And the way had been prepared for the final step: When Musorgsky died Rimsky-Korsakov "undertook to set in order and complete all of [his] works"—not just the ones that Musorgsky had left incomplete and in disorder, but even the ones that he had left completed and in order—even *Boris Godunov*, which not only had been completed but in its completed form had been found worthy of publication, of performance "with uninterrupted success" from 1874 to 1882; which had been brought to this completed form by years of work, of thought, of second thought, of consideration of what Rimsky-Korsakov believed it should be, of decision what Musorgsky himself wanted it to be; and which, when he had made it what he wanted, nobody had a right to make anything else.

The way had been prepared; but the step was one that a painter or a poet would not have taken. If Rimsky-Korsakov had been a painter or a poet he might have had the same opinion of the technical faults in Musorgsky's work: he might have been, in Tovey's words, "a perky and conceited little mind" incapable "of telling a blunder from a stroke of genius or feature of style." He might also have been an arrogant, a vengeful little mind: he might have thought Musorgsky's light praise for a few things in *Snyegoorochka* and indifference to the rest were caused by "his fatuous self-conceit and conviction that the path he had chosen in art was the only true path," while his own conceit and conviction that *his* was the only true path gave him not indifference but a burning desire to impose his method on the other artist, a less conscious desire to avenge the slight to his method and work. He might have failed to understand that the other man's path *was* the only true one for him, and that

his own was the true one only for himself; that technical training had indeed made his capacities strong and lack of it had indeed left the other man's weak, but that his strength was not transferable: since technique was acquired, and existed, in the different terms in which each artist was articulate in his medium, he could not alter the other man's technical practices in accordance with his own, without altering those terms of the man's personal artistic functioning. But he would have been restrained by one thing that he did understand—that another artist's work is inviolable. And it was Rimsky-Korsakov's failure to understand this that led him to his act of vandalism.

Moreover, a painter or a poet would not have been allowed to commit this act. A painter or a poet would have known himself that he must not lay hands on another man's work; and if he didn't know it the world would have known it for him. But I once pointed out that people who bring to literature the understanding which permits them to be fairly discriminating about a performance of *Hamlet* bring no such understanding to a performance of Beethoven, a transcription of Bach. It was this lack of understanding that caused Rimsky-Korsakov himself to do what he did, and others then to accept what he had done: a world that would have known enough to reject a painter's or a poet's transformation of another man's painting or poem and to condemn him for it, has listened to Rimsky-Korsakov's transformation of *Boris Godunov* and accepted his justification of it.

"It must be remembered," says Carl Van Vechten in his introduction to the new edition of *My Musical Life*, "that Rimsky-Korsakov meant it all for the best, that he did no more for his dead friend than he was constantly doing for himself, and that he made it possible for Musorgsky's music drama to be performed not only in Russia but also out of it. And the logic of his answer to his critics is unassailable. If, he hypothesizes, the future may decide his work on the Musorgsky manuscripts to be an impiety, then all the future has to do is to return to the original scores, none of which he destroyed." What should be remembered, rather, is the occasional evidence that arrogance,

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and anger at Musorgsky's scorn for his "conservatory learning" and indifference to his work, also impelled Rimsky-Korsakov; that what he might do to his own music he was not privileged to do to anyone else's; that *Boris Godunov* did not require Rimsky-Korsakov's alterations in order to succeed; that with these alterations what was performed everywhere was not Musorgsky's music drama but Rimsky-Korsakov's transformation of it; and that once this had taken root everywhere in opera houses and in people's minds it was almost impossible to dislodge it for Musorgsky's original.

As finally revised by Musorgsky after its rejection by the committee representing the directors of the imperial theaters, *Boris* was produced at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg in 1874 "with great success," Rimsky-Korsakov tells us. It continued to be performed once or twice each year, except 1881, until 1882, when, "the Lord knows why, productions of the opera ceased altogether, although it had enjoyed uninterrupted success. . . . There were rumors afloat that the opera had displeased the imperial family; there was gossip that its subject was unpleasant to the censors." But Rimsky-Korsakov mentions no rumor of any difficulties created for performers or audience by defects in Musorgsky's writing. And when he speaks of his revision later it is only to say how well it sounded. That was its purpose—to make the work sound well to him.

Nor is it true that his revisions in themselves made possible performances that would not have been given without them. The truth is rather that in a situation where he could get *Boris* performed, and where someone else would have secured a performance of Musorgsky's original, Rimsky-Korsakov secured a performance of his own revision. Once out of the repertory Musorgsky's work would have stayed out for a number of years, just as Verdi's *Othello* and Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* were out of the Metropolitan's repertory for twenty years or so, and for the same reasons—among them the fact that the men who directed the imperial theaters were as uncompelled by greatness in art as Gatti-Casazza and Ziegler of the Metropolitan. *Othello*

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and *Figaro* were restored at the Metropolitan eventually, not because they were rewritten, but because Edward Johnson, who succeeded Gatti-Casazza, had ideas about the Metropolitan's repertory that included things like *Othello* and *Figaro*. *Boris*, too, would have been restored eventually through some similar personal intervention; and it could have been restored through Rimsky-Korsakov's intervention in 1896. In that year he accepted the chairmanship of the Society of Musical Gatherings; and "at the same time," as he puts it in a statement which betrays the capacity for concealing truth behind the show of soberly, unflinchingly telling it, "there sprang up in the Society the idea of a stage production of *Boris Godunov* in my revision." With a different man in his position there would have "sprung up" the idea of a production of Musorgsky's original work. And if the intervention had been for this original, the original instead of the revision would have been produced by Mamontov's company in Moscow with Chaliapin and brought to St. Petersburg by this company in 1899; it would have come to the Mariinsky Theater with Chaliapin in 1904; it would have gone with him to Paris in 1908 in the production that carried the work to western Europe and eventually to America.

Once the revision had been established everywhere in this way instead of the original, the logic of Rimsky-Korsakov's answer might be unassailable in the world of pure thought, but in the world of action—which is to say the opera house—it was routine, inertia, lack of conscience or understanding that proved unassailable by a few critics' demonstrations of the revision's "impiety." The original score has been available since 1928; but it is still not used for performances.

July 25, October 10, 1942

Dr. Herbert Graf, the Metropolitan's stage director, has written a book called *The Opera and Its Future in America*.²³ For the simpler-minded among us who think opera is a number of exciting works by Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, Musorgsky, its future

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seems obvious: the best possible performances of these works to satisfy the interest of those who are excited by them, and to stimulate the imaginations of the creators of new works. But what is opera for us is for Dr. Graf only one of the particular forms of "the eternal musical theater" determined by "particular social, political and cultural surroundings." And neither about "the eternal musical theater" nor about its particular forms does he write on the plane of fact on which he operates as a stage director in the opera house. Instead, with a German inclination to operate with concepts and systems, he erects one of the particular forms, that of the Greeks, into a concept of *the* musical theater, which he then imposes on subsequent forms.

The Greek theater was one in which "all arts—poetry, music, the dance, painting, sculpture, and architecture . . . worked together as a perfect ensemble in the service of a common purpose"; it also was a democratic folk theater, which represented folk emotion about subjects close to the folk mind and heart, and the need for community participation, as one can see in the architectural form of the theater: the single tier of seats continuous with the performing space, which represented the absence of class distinctions in the audience and involved this audience in the performance as a participant. And what the Greek theater was the musical theater must be; so that considering a later form Dr. Graf is concerned with the proscenium arch and curtain that separate the audience from the performers, or with the galleries that separate classes of the audience, instead of with the effectiveness and validity of what is performed—and what represents the conditions and necessities of its own period—for its own audience in its own theater, or for us today.

Thus, the attempts of the seventeenth-century Italians to reproduce Greek drama were wrong because they represented not folk emotion but the mere intellectual interest of aristocrats, not the need of community participation but an aristocratic society's desire for mere entertainment—as was evident in the palace theaters in which the audience was separated from the performers and made into a mere spectator. Wrong also were

the later performances in public theaters in which tiers of boxes and seats separated the different classes of the audience—performances which, as mere spectacles, degenerated into “medley[s] of independent attractions: singing for the sake of vocal display, dancing to show off feats of virtuosity in bodily movement, scenery for the sake of mere pomp and color.” But although Mozart’s operas were democratized through an infusion of elements of folk opera—the every-day, true-to-life subjects close to the mind and heart of the folk; although Beethoven’s and Verdi’s works continued this tendency; although Wagner used subjects from the history and mythology of his own people in works that employed all the elements of the stage in the service of “social document[s] of folk expression”—yet in the end Dr. Graf is not satisfied with even perfect performances of Mozart or Wagner if proscenium arch and curtain separate audience from performers, if tiers of boxes and seats separate groups of the audience, if this audience is not the folk.

In all this, whatever facts Dr. Graf deals with often acquire false meaning in the process of being incorporated in the conceptual systematizations that are developed without regard for their lack of relation to fact. It is only in his thought that proscenium arch and curtain must change the audience to a detached spectator interested in mere entertainment, and the performance to a mere spectacle which must degenerate into a “medley of independent attractions”: in the opera house thoughtful audiences have been emotionally involved in performances on a stage beyond a proscenium arch, and performances have been given on that stage which have used their various elements properly and effectively; and the true causes of the spectacular excesses of the operatic performances of two hundred years ago would have produced the same excesses in a theater without proscenium arch and curtain.

So when Dr. Graf discusses opera in America as an importation by a moneyed aristocracy of an alien art in foreign languages that had no “broad basis of support in the masses of the people,” and writes that “the arrival of Gatti-Casazza in 1908

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marks the beginning of the truly brilliant era of the Metropolitan"; that with Gatti's departure there ended "the great age of foreign opera in its original form, produced with the most famous casts and elaborate effects . . . for the benefit of an exclusive society which . . . had lost its regency" as a result of the 1929 crash; that the democratization of the Metropolitan—e.g., the replacing of the boxes in the grand tier by seats, which he calls "a step toward widening the opera's appeal and basis of support"—has brought changes in production, like the increasing use of American singers and the English language, which point toward a future opera like the integrated musical theater of the Greeks: an opera of the people in a theater of the people, employing subjects, a language, a style of performance that will engage their emotions.

He carries on this development of the subject in his thought, remote from such realities as the fact that the foreign art imported by the moneyed aristocracy in the boxes had as broad a basis of support as it could have in the music public in the galleries; the fact that there was a difference between the artistically brilliant performances of Gatti's first years and the shabby, chaotic, out-of-tune performances of his later years, some of which Dr. Graf himself witnessed; the fact that those performances "with the most famous casts and elaborate effects" conducted by Mahler and Toscanini were not mere gaudy spectacles for a moneyed aristocracy but models of what operatic performance should be; the fact that the replacement of grand tier boxes with seats costing five dollars each represented perfectly the democratization that took place in the Metropolitan; the fact that the general public contributed the three millions to buy the opera house but the moneyed aristocrats still control the producing company; the fact that the improvement under Edward Johnson has been in the direction of the recent performances of *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Fidelio* in their original languages with the best available singers, mostly foreigners; the fact that the influence of "the people" even in

the opera house of today is what is responsible for the excesses of exhibitionistic stars in the performances.

The result of Dr. Graf's preoccupation with the conceptual development of his subject, in other words, is to make his writing shockingly superficial, inaccurate, and uncritical even in the artistic matters in which a practicing operatic stage director would be expected to be sharply perceptive and critical.

Dr. Graf's performance is typical of German writing. As a stage director he is cloudy where the *Professor Doktor* is heavily pedantic; but the striking thing about German writing is the combination of its pedantic fact-grubbing with a concept-spinning so freed from connection with fact, sometimes, as to become utterly fantastic, and indeed often manipulating facts, and misrepresenting them, for its purposes. An extreme example of this writing was Adorno's discussion of the effect of radio on the symphony, and I was interested in a recent review of Franz Neumann's *Behemoth*⁴¹ which praised it for its information and comment but observed that "when he generalizes his observations into an interpretation . . . he succumbs to the passion for excessive abstraction and system-mongering."

But even more interesting, because it deals with the writing—the typical writing—of a musicologist, is Lincoln Kirstein's description (which I have just reread) of Curt Sachs's *World History of the Dance*.⁵⁰ According to Mr. Kirstein, Dr. Sachs also starts with a concept—that the dance was, and therefore is properly, something people do together, a social, a communal, often a religious activity—which means that it is only improperly something they look at, for example in a theater. And as a result "he traces the development of social dancing in the Western world, primarily in Europe, from the Protolithic period, through the lower Paleolithic, through the middle Paleolithic, down through the Protoneolithic to the later tribal cultures and Greece. His discussion of Renaissance social dances is no less detailed and no less interesting, but it is curious that he gives so much space to remote antiquity and comparatively little to more recent periods. . . . These later periods do not

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admit of theorizing or reconstruction and have the additional impact of their immediacy for us"; and for Dr. Sachs, says Mr. Kirstein, their dances are "phenomena of a social degeneration from the primitive *typus*."

This preoccupation with what is remote from the realities of an art that interest and affect us, this scorn for these realities is typical of the musicological writing that I have been planning to discuss. Any day now.

August 15, 1942

Merely to use words in metrical patterns, or paints in coherent forms, or musical sounds in continuous progressions—is something which not everyone can do, something which requires specific ability or talent. This is not to say the talent is rare; on the contrary, it is common: a large number of people have this facility with words, paints, or sounds. But only a few produce valuable poetry, painting, or music; for this requires more than mere articulateness in an artistic medium. Involved with this articulateness, operating through it, crystallized in the completed form are the artist's personal resources—what he is in character, mind, feeling, what he has lived through, what his experience has done to him and for him, what understanding and insight it has given him. They give his work of art its meaning, its character, its style; and where these impress us as important or great it is because the articulateness in the medium relates itself, in the artist, to an inner core of important or great qualities, emotions, insights—an inner core which governs the flow of words, paints, or sounds, eliminates what is superfluous, what is imitative or derivative, and produces a style, a form, a content which are concentratedly, homogeneously individual.

The mere existence of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony is evidence of talent: most of us could not produce an hour and a quarter of symphonic music, or even the first minute. Shostakovich is able to make sounds follow sounds the first minute, the second minute, and every succeeding minute to the seventy-

fifth; he is able to produce sounds for every requirement of structure and meaning—every theme, every manipulation, every transition, every climax, every detail of expressive content—of an hour-and-a-quarter-long symphony concerned with the struggle and final victory of humanity over barbarism; he is able to produce sounds that are now in this style, now in that, orchestrated now this way, now that, now loud, now soft, fast, slow, excited, calm, boldly assertive, quietly introspective, dramatic, lyric, ironic, pastoral, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, and in the end Soviet Russian affirmative-triumphant.

But the music that is all these is derivative, eclectic: one hears the conventional pastoral style of the past two centuries; one hears this style melodically and harmonically distorted in the manner of Shostakovitch—which is derived from Prokofiev; one hears a long crescendo of repetitions of one theme in the manner of Ravel's *Bolero*, including the unceasing snare-drum; among the other things one hears even—surprisingly—a passage for strings in the manner of Sibelius. The music also is diffuse, saying everything at enormously expanded length; it is as pretentious in style as in length; and what it says so pretentiously is feeble, inane, banal. Pretentiousness leaps out at one from that long crescendo of repetitions of one theme—the pretentiousness of the conception, the intention, of the inane theme itself, of the unresourceful, crude, blatant variations in accompanying figuration and orchestration that are devised for the repetitions, of the noise that is resorted to at the end. And these qualities of the music represent the personal resources that are involved with Shostakovitch's articulateness in his medium.

One notes, however, that the pretentious banalities, the grandiloquent fervors and affirmations are of the sort to impress an unsophisticated mass audience; that the constant shifting from one striking idea, style, figuration, instrumental combination to another—now pastoral oboe over strings, now this pastoral style melodically and harmonically distorted, now dissonant noise, now a solo bassoon, now a long crescendo of repetitions of one theme, now portentously plucking basses, now

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a combination of trumpet, harp, and contrabassoon—is a way of catching this audience's ear each time that it is about to be lost. One notes, in short, that the symphony represents not only Shostakovitch's resources but the ideas which govern musical composition in Russia.

Shostakovitch himself has contended that "there can be no music without ideology. The old composers, whether they knew it or not, were upholding a political theory. Most of them, of course, were bolstering the rule of the upper classes. Only Beethoven was a forerunner of the revolutionary movement . . . [who] wished to give new ideas to the public and rouse it to revolt against its masters." His own end as a Soviet composer is "to contribute . . . toward the growth of our remarkable country"; to write music expressive of the conception of "our epoch as something heroic, spirited, and joyous," music which "lifts and heartens and lightens people for work and effort," music which these people can understand, and which he therefore endeavors to make "simple and expressive." And a Soviet critic, Grigori Schneerson, has described the Soviet composer as one who "plunges into the social currents swirling round him" and responds to "the demands of the wide masses of people, their artistic tastes" by speaking to them "in a new, powerful, and intelligible language." The democratization of music in Russia would, then, have this effect if Beethoven were living there today: not that the masses would be given the privilege of hearing the last quartets in which Beethoven expressed mystical states of inner illumination and superearthly exaltation, but that he would be made to write on the level of emotion and language of the masses. What it has meant in Shostakovitch's case is that grandiloquently banal affirmations have been added to the distorted grimacings and grotesqueries of his own inclination.

Actually Mozart's G minor Symphony did not bolster the Hapsburg monarchy and Beethoven's last quartets did not undermine it; these works neither upheld nor attacked any political theory; they did not originate in any external events. Mozart and Beethoven wrote from internal compulsions; they expressed

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their own unique personal emotions and insights in their own unique languages and styles; they wrote for the listener with educated sensitivities who would be able to understand them. All this may condemn them in Russian eyes almost as much as if they had written to bolster the Hapsburg monarchy; but it produced the G minor Symphony and the last quartets; whereas if Mozart and Beethoven had written in a way that satisfied the Russians they would have produced works like Beethoven's notorious *Battle* Symphony.

And on the other hand Shostakovitch can turn from the battlefield straight to his pen and music paper; he can produce an hour-and-a-quarter-long symphony that expresses, in terms which the Russian masses understand, the struggle and final victory of humanity over barbarism as they imagine and feel it; his symphony can move listeners in other countries by its associations with events in which their emotions are involved; but what plays on their emotions about the sufferings and heroism of the Russian people is an excessively long piece of bad music.

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Beethoven's Eighth Symphony is a work for the Russians to think about and learn from. The thing to consider is the buoyancy, joyousness, and exuberant playfulness embodied in the work, and their complete lack of connection with the turmoil of Beethoven's daily life at the time he was writing it—the turmoil created by his attempts to break up the intimacy between his brother Johann and Therese Obermayer. And the thing to learn is that the relation between Beethoven's artistic functioning and his experience was not immediate and direct: his articulateness in his medium related itself to an inner core of personal qualities, emotions, insights, which were in turn what were altered and developed by his experience—and not by every daily occurrence, but only by experiences that were relevant to what was developing deep inside him. When that inner develop-

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ment had produced the emotions and attitudes indicated by the Eighth Symphony they pressed for expression in the music of this symphony, unaffected by the external turmoil that was irrelevant to them. Earlier too it was such emotions and insights—concerned now with the heroism which Beethoven himself had developed and learned to know in the face of disaster—that operated through his articulateness in his medium to produce the *Eroica* Symphony, fortified this time by events and ideas outside which were relevant. If there had been no French Revolution and no Napoleon there would have been no torn-up dedication, but there would have been the same *Eroica* Symphony.

Ernest Newman once made much the same point about Mozart, citing the striking differences in the three symphonies which Mozart wrote in approximately two months of the summer of 1788—the last great symphonies in E flat, G minor, and C major—as evidence of the fact that “the creative imagination of a great artist functions too deep down within him to be greatly affected by anything that may happen on the surface of his life or his being. The subconscious is of much more importance in the artist than the conscious; and the subconscious proceeds by its own mysterious inner chemistry and obeys its own mysterious laws. . . . Mozart the man was uniformly wretched throughout the whole of this period; the changes in the moods of the three works were due simply to changes in his aesthetic chemistry with which the experiences of his conscious mind had the minimum of connection.”

All this deserves the attention and thought of the Russians who have been over-excited about the relation of art to the conditions—the political and social order, the prevailing ideas and emotional atmosphere—of its time and place, and over-eager to exhibit to the world a music that would show its immediate and direct relation to these conditions in Russia today. By giving so much importance to these external conditions they have created this difficulty for themselves—that it is a Hapsburg Austria from which we have got the music of Mozart, Haydn,

Beethoven, Schubert, and a Soviet Russia from which we get only the music of Shostakovitch. They can escape this difficulty only by recognizing the unimportance of those external conditions in relation to the greatness we are aware of in some music, the importance instead of the composer's personal and musical resources. Mozart's time and place are represented in his writing by certain characteristics of content, language, and style that are to be found in the writing of hundreds of his contemporaries; what is unique in his music represents what is uniquely his in resources of emotion and medium; and it is such resources in Beethoven that produced the music which a hundred others living in the same time and place did not produce. Recognizing all this the Russians might relax their pressure on their composers to write, for all to hear, as Artists of the Soviet Union—recognizing further that this freedom would not cause a facile-minded, pretentious Shostakovitch to write anything better than he had been writing, but would permit a man of greater stature, when he did appear in Russia, to produce the music he was capable of.

September 12, 1942

From the beginning, six years ago, there have been occasional letters from readers of this column who have sighed over what a good music critic I would be if I didn't have that prejudice against Brahms. "Dogmatic" and "opinionated" are other words they have used; and I have also been told that attitudes like mine toward Brahms were something to keep to myself, not to express in print.

Those readers will forgive me for being amused by their assumption that only an estimate of Brahms as high as theirs could represent rational judgment of experience, and that an estimate as low as mine must represent prejudice in the face of experience. Actually, since I have repeatedly expressed my love for certain works of Brahms, my dislike of others cannot represent a prejudice against him. And actually both my likes

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and dislikes in Brahms are the product of more than twenty-five years' listening to the music, study of it, thought about it; for about half that period it was the music I cherished most; and then I began to be aware of qualities in the First Symphony, the concertos, the chamber music, that made me dislike these works which I had loved, while I continued to love the sets of variations on themes of Haydn and Paganini, the Fourth Symphony, some of the songs, which were not labored and pretentious and saccharine in the way I found the others to be.

My long experience, study, and thought have crystallized in my reasoned judgments of Brahms's music; my correspondents' experience, study, and thought have crystallized in their reasoned judgments; and their contention, in effect, is that where our judgments differ and I refuse to give up mine and accept theirs I am prejudiced, opinionated, dogmatic, and should have the decency to be silent. But a long-developed and reasoned judgment, even when unfavorable, is not a prejudice; and while it is likely to be a strongly held and strongly expressed conviction, a man whose strongly held convictions are long-developed and reasoned judgments cannot be called opinionated, and even his strong statements of such judgments cannot be called dogmatic. Moreover, he must be granted the right to the reasoned judgments he has arrived at through years of listening, study, and thought; and his function, his duty, his sole usefulness as a critic, if he is one, is to state them—to state, that is, the reasons with the judgments. For criticism is not the mere opinion that this piece of music is good and that one is bad, or this is a good performance and that is a bad one; it is the reasons for the opinion, in which the writer applies to what he has heard the illuminating insights that constitute his value to his readers.

October 24, 1942

Three instrumental sections of Berlioz's Symphony *Romeo and Juliet* have been played by Toscanini before: (1) *Romeo Alone*

—*Sadness—Concert and Ball—Great Festivities in Capulet's Palace*; (2) *Love Scene* (with the introductory *Capulet's Garden* omitted); (3) *Queen Mab*. They include some of the most beautiful music of the work; and in performing the symphony in its entirety at the opening concerts of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Society Toscanini provided a first hearing of two other astounding pieces of music, *Juliet's Funeral Procession* and *Romeo in the Family Vault of the Capulets*, as well as the impressive instrumental *Introduction*, the vocal *Prologue*, with its completely different and exquisite *Queen Mab*, and the *Finale*, which descends to mere operatic grandiloquence.

The best parts of this symphony are enough to make it one of the great works of the musical literature of all times—which brings up the question why this should have been the first complete performance in the twenty-five years of my experience as a concert-goer. One reason is that the work requires a chorus, which an orchestral society can engage only once or twice a season, and which it will engage then for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony unless a conductor presses, like Toscanini, for the *Missa Solemnis*, or Verdi's *Requiem*, or now Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*. There is the question why it took Toscanini so long to insist on *Romeo and Juliet*; but other conductors undoubtedly are influenced by the fact that they will have a success with the Ninth Symphony that they will not have with Berlioz's work, which is more difficult to play well and does not impress the public.

"The general public has no imagination; accordingly pieces which appeal solely to the imagination have no public," said Berlioz when he recommended the omission of *Romeo in the Family Vault of the Capulets*; and there were other sections which did not seem to be making much of an impression on some of the people at the recent performances. For one thing Berlioz's thought and language and style are completely individual, completely unrelated to anything else the public hears, and above all to the German music it hears most of the time. What they require to become better understood is the familiar-

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ity born of frequent hearings; but because the music is not understood it is infrequently played. What they require also is that the listener be receptive; but even when he hears the music he listens with ears and mind prejudiced against it by what is written about it

In an article on critics in the *American Scholar* a few years ago Dr. Paul Henry Lang²⁹ wrote: "What have they done to help the growing millions of music lovers on their way to the appreciation of great music? They have not only failed to guide them but worse than that have frequently misguided them. Wherever we turn our eyes, to daily reports, articles in the music section of the Sunday papers, or program notes, we are confronted with a thick tangle of prejudices, inherited formulas and catchwords, a prodigious lack of information, and an unbelievable ignorance of musical literature." In continental Europe "newspapers have opened their columns to musical scholars"; and that, it was indicated, was what they would have to do here. Now I would not dispute Dr. Lang's evaluation of the writings of our musical journalists; but I have not yet encountered in the writings of our scholars anything that leads me to believe the public will get the guidance it needs from them. The public, if it is wise, will listen to Berlioz without the help of Mr. Downes; but also without the help of Dr. Einstein, whose statements about *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Damnation of Faust*, as I pointed out a while ago, were a restatement of "inherited formulas and catchwords" that betrayed "an unbelievable ignorance" of the music. And also without the help of Dr. Lang himself.

In the article I have mentioned he discussed one of the errors which the critics encouraged instead of fighting—"the worship of the big, the long, the ponderous, and the loud," of which one manifestation was Stokowski's "gigantic orchestral paraphrases of [Bach's] spiritual songs, of . . . intimate chorale preludes . . . and of works for chamber orchestra and solo violin." And he wrote: "The trend toward grandiloquence was a product of the romantic era, and the musical taste of our pub-

lic has its roots in the musical style of that period. The musicians of the last century, from Berlioz to Strauss . . . expressed their thoughts by large gestures and used a complicated, at times even enormous, technical apparatus. It was therefore concluded that deep poetical feeling cannot be expressed without an intricate form of execution. . . . Today we wonder why musicians of judgment were captivated by orchestral scores which when dispossessed of their tremendous orchestral ornaments show an astonishingly meager invention and vague construction."

This did not dispose the mind of a reader of the *American Scholar* to appreciate the beauty, effectiveness, and honesty of some of the music of Berlioz that would be so strange to his ears, or its delicacy, finesse, subtlety, economy. It did not prepare him for the affecting loveliness of the sustained melodies—in *Romeo Alone* and the *Love Scene*—that move and turn in such unusual and such exquisite ways; for the enchantment of Capulet's silent, starlit garden produced by the strings *pppp*, the two flutes *pp*, the few notes of the distant horn; for the musical evocation of the scene of the two lovers, achieved with such poetic insight and such reticence; for the sheer orchestral magic of *Queen Mab*; for the poignancy of the single note reiterated *pp* at intervals by the chorus over the orchestra's fugal march, in *Juliet's Funeral Procession*. It did not prepare him for the brilliance of *Great Festivities in Capulet's Palace*, the shattering power of *Romeo in the Vault of the Capulets*, in which large means are used with no less originality and discretion and honesty. I stress this honesty because Dr. Lang impugned it. One encounters things in Berlioz's scores, Toscanini said, that one cannot understand or imagine—until one hears them from the orchestra, when their poetic purpose and their marvelous rightness for this purpose become clear. Dr. Lang did not help his reader to understand this—to understand that Berlioz's musical thought has an orchestral form of which one cannot "dispossess" it without doing it the violence that Stokowski's transcriptions do Bach. One can say the same thing

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of Strauss's *Don Quixote*; and if one does not merely count instruments but considers what is said with them, one finds "the big, the long, the ponderous, and the loud" in Brahms, whom Dr. Lang described as "the lonely retrospective musician who was trying to save the glory of classical art in a world engulfed in the dramatic frenzy of the Neo-German School."

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Much of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* is not only exquisitely contrived as sound and as music but marvelously contrived for the realization of the poetic qualities of the episodes it deals with. And Toscanini's approach to the music was at all times by way of the poetic situation: it was as the pronouncement of an angered prince that the passage for the brass in the *Introduction* was worked over for quality of sound, inflection, legato, portamento; at the point where Romeo's entrance into the vault of the Capulets *Allegro agitato e disperato* broke off, Toscanini prefaced the soft antiphonal chords of the brass, the woodwinds, the strings with hushing outspread arms and the words "*grand silence!*"; and the tearing phrases later in this section caused him to remind the orchestra: "DI-SPER-A-TO! You are all DI-SPER-A-TI!"

His poetic insight operated through the unique musicality that produced its usual marvels of inflected, contoured phrases and plastically molded forms; poetic insight and musicality made use of the ear for beauty of sound and texture, the technical mastery that produced what the ear desired; technical mastery was made effective by the will, the concentration, the intensity which—on this occasion as on so many others—had to overcome the inertia, the indifference of some for whom this was merely work for pay. It was not until the second performance that the beauty of sound and texture was fully achieved by the orchestra; not until the third that the horns played their difficult passage in *Queen Mab* without the blemishes that had disfigured it previously. On the other hand the singing of the

Westminster Choir and of Jennie Tourel was superb at all three performances.

In my own lifetime, and probably in the lifetimes of most other people, this was the first performance of Berlioz's work in its entirety—and not just any performance but one conducted by Toscanini which gave the work a form, a life in sound such as we are not likely to hear again. The mechanical means existed by which millions of people throughout the country could have heard the performance this once; but it was not broadcast because N.B.C. had bought exclusive rights to Toscanini's name for broadcasting purposes and C.B.S. had bought similar rights to the name of the New York Philharmonic; and if the companies had done this out of the devotion to music which they loudly proclaim, that devotion evidently wasn't sufficient to induce them, even on the most extraordinary of musical occasions, either to waive their commercially valuable rights or to pool them and broadcast the performance jointly.

November 7, 1942

"This man, is he a musician—or is he a musicologist?" was the way one great musician expressed his opinion not only of a statement in a book, and of the man who had written it, but incidentally of what musicologists feel and think and find to say about music. The musicologists' own opinion of the value of their activities was expressed in Dr. Lang's statement in the *American Scholar*—that the public would get the guidance it needed when newspapers opened their columns to the scholars. They do not contend merely that their investigations into matters like *Dissonance in Early Polyphony up to Tinctoris* establish valuable facts in the history of musical language and style, or that their investigations into the relation of a musical style to the other human activities of its period establishes valuable facts in the history of culture; they contend instead that knowledge of such facts is indispensable for the complete experience and correct understanding of music as music. When they insist

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on our being aware of the relation between a piece of music and the other activities of its period it is not merely to give us correct notions about history: we are, as I understand it, to take Mozart's G minor or Beethoven's Op. 130 as a communication of the conditions, forces, tendencies of its period. Certainly it is possible to discover in a Cézanne still-life relations of its elements to what operated on Cézanne as he painted it—not only the work of other painters and their ideas about painting, but the general ideas and attitudes, the social and political conditions of his time. But it is possible also for a person with no notion of these relations to take the still-life for what it is and what it was intended to be—something exercising power on mind and emotions as an arrangement of pictorial elements. And so with one of Mozart's symphonies or Beethoven's last quartets.

Addressing a meeting of his fellows, Dr. Curt Sachs pointed out how they served music: "To music, elapsing in time and fading into oblivion, we give memory, permanence, and the dignity that history alone can yield." I have myself commented from time to time on the fact that while certain important works are played over and over again others are left unperformed; I have made this point about concertos of Mozart, sonatas, symphonies, quartets of Haydn, Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Childhood of Christ*, *Trojans*. But it is not such music that the musicologists serve. True, we are indebted to Dr. Alfred Einstein for the experience of those superb Haydn symphonies which the New Friends of Music let us hear for the first time: it was he who reconstructed the scores from various manuscripts of the parts. But Dr. Einstein, after giving us those Haydn symphonies, gave us two utterly inconsequential entr'actes from Mozart's *Thamos, King of Egypt*. And the unfamiliar music of Handel promised by a public concert of the International Congress of the American Musicological Society a few years ago turned out to be mere exercises in which the youthful Handel tried his hand in styles of his period.

So with the music of earlier centuries, which Dr. Sachs prob-

ably was referring to. Musicologists are concerned about the belief of some people that nothing written before Bach is worth attention. "Music," wrote Dr. Lang in his article, "was a vital part of the culture of all ages and was affected by the same intellectual tendencies that animated the other arts and letters of the time"—the point being that the intellectual tendencies in early centuries which produced great literature and painting and architecture must have produced music as great as these other arts, and as great as the Mozart symphonies and Beethoven quartets of later centuries. But this contention is refuted by our own century, which has produced the painting of Picasso, among others, but no music of comparable magnitude: it is possible, then, for early centuries which produced great architecture or painting to have produced less great music, or music which satisfied their emotional requirements but not ours. And the contention is made not on behalf of the music of Victoria, Lasso, Palestrina, Byrd, the other English madrigalists, Monteverdi, Purcell—which many music-lovers do know and find beautiful; but on behalf of things like the inconsequential little pieces which Dr. Sachs offered us recently with the comment that "the music in this album is not 'ancient music'; stale, dusty, and at best a curio for historically minded snobs. It is no more 'ancient' than Rembrandt's painting or Gothic cathedrals."

Almost inevitably the crying up of what is remote involves a crying down of what is immediate—which, as inevitably, lessens the guiding influence and authority that Dr. Lang explicitly demands for the musicologists and that Dr. Sachs apparently resents their not getting. The newspapers *have* opened their columns to communications from Dr. Lang which have elaborated some of the points in his *American Scholar* article, and which like that article have been curiously unscholarly in their intemperateness and confusion of thought and expression and in their misrepresentation of fact to make it fit into their conceptual patterns. Like Dr. Graf's concept of *the* musical theater with which he flogs everything after the Greek, and Dr. Sachs's concept of *the* dance with which he flogs modern "phe-

nomena of a social degeneration from the primitive *typus*," is Dr. Lang's concept of *the* "fundamental approach to an understanding of music" with which he flogs the musical life of today as he creates it to fit into his argument. This approach is "the road of intimate choral music, chamber music, piano music, and songs" performed, as they were written to be performed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the home. With it he attacks the transfer of this music to "a huge auditorium," where the chamber music "began to transgress its limits and assume certain orchestral characteristics ill-befitting its nature," where the songs were "bellowed . . . by an operatic prima donna intent on bringing down the house," and where music which had been something people "literally lived with" became instead something they "face . . . as exhibition." And with it he attacks also the music for large orchestra written expressly for the large concert hall. But a man who argues that because music once was written to be performed by small groups of instruments or voices in a home composers today must not write for a large orchestra and we must not listen to quartets in Town Hall; who for this purpose misrepresents the Budapest Quartet's concerts of chamber music or Elisabeth Schumann's recitals of lieder; who contends that we who listen to this music performed in a concert hall are affected by it less than an Esterhazy or a Lobkowitz who listened to it performed in his ballroom—such a man must be prepared to have us decline his guidance.

December 19, 1942

At Webster Aitken's two recent piano recitals in the New York Times Hall and the Frick Collection I was struck even more than previously by his command of his instrument. By this I mean not only his ability to produce with perfection and ease whatever Bach or Debussy asked in speed of passage-work, complexity of figuration, clarity of polyphonic texture, but the feeling for the nature and capacities of the piano which made every sound that came from it—every melody, run, or chord, from

the slightest pianissimo to the most brilliant fortissimo—so unfailingly beautiful, so stunningly magnificent merely as sound. But at the same time as I noted the beauty of the sound I was aware of its equally impressive musical significance—the dynamic inflections and tensions with which the contrapuntal lines moved against each other in Bach's *Goldberg* Variations, or with which the florid melodic line was carried from point to point in the Sarabande of the E minor Partita; the evocative potency of the flashing, darting, twisting sonorities and figurations in Debussy's *Goldfish*; the humor that was infused into Debussy's exercises in Debussyan idiom in his Etudes. The first half or so of Bach's Variations, where Aitken functioned with security and assurance and the highest pitch of intensity, reminded me of a painting of Cézanne by the way the successive pieces came into existence as powerful forms shaped with completeness and finality in every detail by powerful emotions and mind. It was one of the greatest achievements in piano-playing that I have heard; and was not the less so for what happened somewhere after the French Overture variation—an accident in the crossing of hands on the one keyboard in music written for two, and a shaken equilibrium that made possible further accidents. In the New York Times Hall the accident was the deadening acoustics of the hall, which dulled the sound of the Debussy music, and reduced to miniature the sound of Bach's E minor Partita played as a work of small scale.

Other matters include the New York Opera Company production of Verdi's *Macbeth*. Having gritted my teeth while some of the Germans among us—joined by Virgil Thomson, who does his worst writing when he indulges in the kind of remote-from-fact concept-spinning the Germans go in for—insisted that Toscanini as an Italian was incapable of performing Beethoven properly, I now had to grit my teeth over the style of Stiedry's performance of Verdi, or rather over the absence of the proper style of this music—over the matter-of-fact statement of what should have been dynamic accompaniment figures, or the metronomic treatment of choral passages that begged for

plasticity, for a broadening in pace and sonority at their climaxes. In addition to the conductor's lack of feeling for the music that made it pallid in style, there were the small size and poor quality of the orchestra that made it pallid in sound. The singing was better: Jess Walters, the Macbeth, has a beautiful voice, though much of the time one hears constriction in its use which will do it harm; and Regina Resnik, who replaced Florence Kirk in the performance I attended, has a strong voice of good timbre which she used with excellent dramatic effect. But the acting was of college-dramatic-society caliber; and the stage director seemed to have given no attention to the problem of what costume, make-up, and wig, and what movements of body and arms would make of a Regina Resnik—on the stage of the Broadway Theater—a Lady Macbeth; with the result that one saw in *Macbeth* someone gotten up as though to parody a night-club entertainer, and moving as though to parody Florence Kirk's imitation of the lunges and crouches of operatic villainesses. If—as I was led to observe last year—one of the New Opera Company's purposes is to provide opportunities and experience for young Americans, one must question whether the right way to achieve this purpose—right for the artists, for the works, for the public—is to give these young singers roles they are not equipped or ready for in performances for sophisticated New York audiences.

December 26, 1942

English B1 (M., W., F. at 10), which Lionel Trilling discussed in *The Nation* a few weeks ago, has its parallel in Music B1 (M., W., F. at 12); and its textbook, the *Survey-History of English Literature* which undertook to give the student "all the useful facts and necessary opinions about English literature," also has its musical equivalents. Mr. Trilling was disturbed by the badness of the material which the book pumped into the student's mind; but if all the judgments in the book were sound

there would still be the necessity of those judgments to disturb me. The education of a young man of college age includes making him acquainted with the great ideas that have been thought, the great literature that has been written; and it is right that it should do so, even though a great many young men of college age are not equipped or ready to appreciate the greatness of the ideas or the literature. Or rather, it would be right if the young men were brought into contact with the material, if everything were done to facilitate the involvement of their minds with it, and if then the minds were left free to become involved or not, to get from the material some meaning and value that it had for them or to get none. There are, no doubt, places where this procedure is followed; but in many colleges the requirements of academic bookkeeping do not permit a young man to get nothing or the "wrong" thing from the philosophy or the literature he has read. To earn his three credits he must get something—if not his own idea, then somebody else's; and not his own "wrong" idea but somebody else's "right" one—in other words, the necessary opinions that are fed to him for four months by someone's survey-history of philosophy or literature, and that he hands back after four months on an examination paper.

This, I say, has its musical equivalent. It is right to bring those young students into contact with the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Haydn—literally, almost, to establish contact between the music and their ears, with the help, let us say, of some explanation of its special procedures and principles of organization—and then to let the music make what effect it can, let it become for some of the students a moving communication and for others a bore. But if students merely experience Mozart's G minor Symphony and are either moved or bored, if they are inarticulate about their experience, if they do not acquire something which they can hand back on an examination paper, there is no course for the purposes of academic bookkeeping. And so for these purposes the students in Music B₁, a survey course in history and appreciation of music, are given "all the useful facts

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and necessary opinions" about the lives of the composers and their music. These facts and opinions are useful and necessary for the students to get credit for the course, but not for them to get a moving experience from the arrangement of sounds that is Mozart's G minor Symphony; and included often are trivialities, vulgarities, and misrepresentations like those which disturbed Mr. Trilling.

January 2, 1943

We may regret not being able to hear some of the legendary musicians of the past; but right now we are able to hear musicians who will be legendary some day; and some of those musicians of the past might not be very impressive today. I did hear Ysaye, but when I was not old enough to know good and bad in performance; and about a year ago I happened to hear an old recording of an Ysaye performance which astonished me by its stylistic vulgarities. In my youth the great orchestra was the Boston Symphony conducted by Muck, which I heard twice in 1917; the great quartet was the Kneisel, which I merely heard about. Years later I heard recordings of the Boston Symphony under Muck which confirmed my recollection of its extraordinary sound and precision, and superb performances conducted by Muck in Europe; but on the other hand, after one of the Budapest Quartet's Beethoven concerts at the Y.M.H.A. a few years ago I asked someone who had heard the Kneisels about their playing, and he was silent a few moments before he said: "Don't ask me about them," and was silent again before he exploded: "Those wooden Indians!" The Flonzaleys, who followed the Kneisels, were anything but wooden Indians; but today we hear in a performance of the Budapest Quartet—in the beauty of the four strands of sound, their musical inflection, their integrated progression, their combined effect as a statement of the work—something that is phenomenal, unique in its province, like the dancing of Markova, an orchestral performance of Toscanini.

We cannot hear the orchestral performances of Nikisch, of Mahler; but we can still hear those of Toscanini. After some of the comments on what I have written about him—for example, the accusation that I have fallen for the Toscanini ballyhoo—I think it well to mention that while my experience of his conducting begins as far back as a performance of *Madama Butterfly* in 1914, when I was better able to appreciate Farrar's looks than Toscanini's musicality, my present estimate of his work is a very recent one. I myself protested against the ballyhoo during his first years with the New York Philharmonic—not that I did not hear the beautiful sonorities, contours, and textures, but that I thought Mengelberg's shaping of the sound-time continuum produced more effective statements of Beethoven and Brahms; as late as 1933, when I had learned to dislike Mengelberg's over-emphatic plastic distortion, I wrote that Toscanini produced beautiful sounds but the same beautiful sounds for all music, whereas Koussevitzky gave the right character to the music of each composer—not merely of Tchaikovsky but of Beethoven and Brahms; and only in the years since then have I come to find Koussevitzky's over-emphatic distortion of Beethoven, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky impossible to listen to, and Toscanini's statements of these composers' works the most deeply satisfying. Looking back I can see what has happened is that I have learned to appreciate and to require plastic economy and subtlety in performance; and that I have learned by hearing them long enough—in other words, by my own experience. I have not, I might add, engaged in vast, cloudy conceptual constructions of the history of culture that have brought me to a conclusion about the relation of Toscanini's conducting to the *Zeitgeist* of this century; I have been concerned entirely with the works of music that have been important to me, and have reached a conclusion about the effectiveness of these works as Toscanini has stated them.

Listening to his recent broadcast of Brahms's Third Symphony and recalling his first performances of this symphony many years ago, I was aware that in some degree he too had changed since

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then—that his performances of Brahms and Beethoven have acquired the breadth and weight they did not have at first. On the other hand there is his performance of Mozart's G minor Symphony, which I had always found excessively impassioned, and in the case of the Victor performance even tumultuous and ferocious: listening to the work as he conducted it recently with the Philadelphia Orchestra in Philadelphia and New York, I found the statement marvelous—powerful, impassioned, but without excess; going back to the Victor records and to records of the broadcast of the last Sunday afternoon concert with the New York Philharmonic in 1936, I was surprised to hear the same tempi and style, and to find the harshness of the Victor performance to be in its recorded sound. (The tempi of the first movement and the finale were the *Allegro molto* and *Allegro assai* which Mozart prescribes; the second movement was taken much faster than the prescribed *Andante*, but demonstrated that any pace that Toscanini adopts is one in which he can make the music effective.) Going after this to Beecham's recorded performance, which I had thought excellent, I found the first movement pallid, with the opening phrases made trivial by their jaunty staccato conclusions.

January 23, 1943

Three years of daily reviewing for a newspaper enable me to luxuriate in the blessedness of being able to stay away from orchestral concerts and solo recitals by the dozens, and to attend the few that give some promise of being worth hearing and writing about. Thus my interest in Mozart and in Szigeti caused me to attend all five of Szigeti's Mozart sonata recitals in the Y.M.H.A. Although some of the works that I heard for the first time turned out to be quite dull there were two, the superbly dramatic K.379 and the fine K.306, that were exciting discoveries; and as it happened each provided an occasion for the great playing—great, for one thing, in the power of its wonderfully inflected and sustained large-spanned phras-

ing—that one can expect to hear from Szigeti sometime during a recital, when after achieving mental equilibrium he functions at the highest point of communicative intensity. For those great moments I willingly endure the scratchy, wiry sounds he is likely to produce in the opening work of the program, when he is not yet at ease, or the fussy or distorted phrasing he may indulge in later on; whereas for no amount of Heifetz's dazzling perfection of sound and technique would I listen to what he makes of Mozart—or, for that matter, of Beethoven or Bach or Schubert (the simplicity of his phrasing in the recorded performance of Schubert's Trio Op. 99 is exceptional; and I am inclined to ascribe it to the influence of Feuermann). I should add that I would have got even more pleasure from the performances if Szigeti's partner had been a pianist and musician of a stature commensurate with his own, or at least without the deficiencies and mannerisms that one was increasingly aware of in Andor Foldes's playing.

Koussevitzky being the great conductor and the considerably less than great musician that he is, I go to one of his concerts only infrequently, to hear a new work which interests me, or to hear the almost unbelievable playing he gets his orchestra to do in the music of twentieth-century French and Russian composers that he does understand well—to hear those performances of Prokofiev's *Classical* Symphony, Debussy's *Nuages* and *Fêtes* and *Après-midi d'un faune*, and Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloë* that are among the wonders of the age. The January concert in Carnegie Hall that I attended began with Corelli's Sarabande, Gigue, and Badinerie, in which one heard the fabulously beautiful sound and finish of the Boston Symphony strings, and also the excessive vehemence of Koussevitzky's treatment of what he evidently thought of as the "climax" of the Sarabande (I could imagine the plastic continuity of the passage as Toscanini would have played it). Then came Martinu's new symphony, which enabled one to hear the even more astounding sound and finish of the entire orchestra, and which Koussevitzky performed very effectively. The effect, however, was only that

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of a pleasantly inconsequential, if gorgeously orchestrated work, produced by a man whose musical feeling seemed to have translated itself into obsessive ostinato rhythms, mostly in three-quarter time, that he had managed to keep going until he had the four movements of a symphony.

Berlioz's *King Lear* Overture got me into Carnegie Hall for a performance by Mitropoulos with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. The work is, as Tovey put it, "a magnificent piece of rhetoric in tragic style"; it is, moreover, an early piece, in which nevertheless the Berlioz ways of thinking—melodic, harmonic, orchestral—are already present, lacking the richness and sureness and subtlety of their maturity in later works, but astonishing and exciting even in their youthful sprawling vigor. On Christmas Day, on the other hand, C.B.S. broadcast Bernard Herrman's performance of a few passages of *L'Enfance du Christ*, one of Berlioz's last works, which W. J. Turner said was his best. Having heard only a few passages, and these few broadcast in a way that caused the orchestra to be blanketed by the voices, I am not in a position to have any strong conviction about the work; but I will mention the impression I got from much of what I heard—that the Berlioz ways of thinking were operating with the expertness of age where poetic impulse was no longer effectual.

As for the Metropolitan Opera Association, I have not yet heard any of its productions, but hope to be able to report on them soon. Meanwhile, I have been interested by the Metropolitan's announcement that Friedrich Schorr, who had wished to retire, had been persuaded to stay for at least one performance with which the Metropolitan would bid farewell to an artist who had given it distinguished service for many years. I have, that is, been struck by this gracious acknowledgment of a debt to one artist, and the failure to make such acknowledgment to another artist who deserves it no less. For many years the exquisite voice and musicianship of Elisabeth Rethberg constituted one of the Metropolitan's most valuable artistic and financial assets; recently Mme. Rethberg, whose singing used to be

effortless, has got herself into difficulties of voice-production that have made her short of breath and unable to stay on pitch; and at the beginning of this season the Metropolitan announced her "resignation" without as much as a verbal statement of its indebtedness to her for her long and distinguished service.

January 16, 1943

The book *Symphony Themes*,⁹ compiled by Raymond Burrows and Bessie Carroll Redmond, is offered to the public not only for reference but for educational—or rather for self-educational—purposes. Three years ago Simon and Schuster were baiting *Men of Music* with the statement that the way to understanding of music was a book "which treats music in the terms of the men who created it." Today they are baiting their compilation of "1,193 principal themes from a hundred of the world's great symphonies" with Deems Taylor's statement (yes, Mr. Taylor is on hand again to do his usual job) that those themes are "just what the listener wants to know, and all that he, lay or expert, *needs* to know: the stuff of which symphonies are made." The authors themselves write, with the same deceptive plausibility: "The simple fact is . . . that the best way to understand what music is talking about is to have a simple statement of the subject itself. Most symphonic movements have two or more subjects which can be very quickly stated."

But this isn't simple, it is over-simple: it omits not only the formal design of the movement, which the reader will merely not be aware of, but all the contextual material in which the themes and their developments occur—for example, the material with which a theme or its development may continue before another theme or its development enters or re-enters. The reader will be unprepared for this contextual material, and will ignore it in his preoccupation with the themes and their developments.

In addition, the book doesn't even do what it undertakes to do—doesn't, that is, give all the themes out of which the symphonies are made. The reader will not find in it the important

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statement beginning at measure 23 of the first movement of the *Eroica*, with the cross-rhythm that not only is built up right away but is used later, from measure 248, to build up the shattering climax of the development; nor the figure in measure 65 that also is worked with immediately and put to further important use in the development, from measure 186. Nor will he find the theme in the second movement, beginning at measure 56, which provides the conclusion for the first section; nor the one with which the coda of this movement begins at measure 209. And these are only a few of the examples I found wherever I looked.

Also, finally, there are questionable omissions, along with even stranger inclusions, in the hundred symphonies—questionable and strange on the basis of the authors' own statement that the group includes "all symphonies that are frequently performed or readily available on records, and many of those which occasionally find their way into concert programs," together with "some of the recent works by native composers, even though their frequency of performance does not yet rank with that of European masterpieces." Thus—to consider only one instance of several—the book omits Mozart's K.338, 297, 200, and 201, which are performed in concerts and available on records, but includes his K.16, 110, and 444, which I didn't know existed even on paper. And frequency of performance justifies inclusion of works by Copland and Harris, but is not likely to create any need of the themes of symphonies by Edward Burlingame Hill, Edwin Stringham, Daniel Gregory Mason, Henry Hadley, and Robert Russell Bennett.

February 13, 1943

Each time I hear Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* after an interval I am struck all over again by its marvels—the ones I had remembered, the ones I had forgotten, the ones I had not noticed before. Recently I played the Glyndebourne recording again; and this time, as I listened with new delight to details of the

vocal line that made the points of the text with such ease and such force, I was struck as never before by the activity of the orchestra. From what is said on the subject you may have the idea that expressive orchestral comment in opera was born with Wagner; if you have, just listen to the orchestra in *Figaro*: listen to it, for one thing, in that unique marvel, the Overture; listen, of course, to the running fire of gay, mocking, witty comment that it keeps up in the great ensembles like the *Cosa sento* trio of Act 1, the finale of Act 2; and listen also to such miraculous details as the change in harmony embodied in the sustained chords of the few winds with poignant figures in violins just before the words *parlo d'amor vegliando* and again before *parlo d'amor sognando* in Cherubino's aria *Non so più cosa son*.

Shortly afterward I attended a performance of the work at the Metropolitan. The audience seemed to enjoy the music that was sung, and to be vastly amused by the things that happened on the stage; but the humor in the figurations of violins or woodwinds didn't get a chuckle. True, the audience wasn't listening for them; but even if it had been it would have found them difficult to hear; for on the scale on which they were produced from the orchestra by Bruno Walter they were almost inaudible in the huge auditorium. In a smaller place it would have been an excellently conducted performance; it was also well-staged, well-acted, and for the most part well-sung. Pinza's superb Figaro was an old story, as was Brownlee's adequate but unimpressive Count. New to me was the Countess of Eleanor Steber, who brought to the part a fine stage presence and a voice that is fresh, agreeable, and used with good musical taste; new also was the Susanna of Bidu Sayao, whose singing was admirable though her voice is small for the Metropolitan's vast space, and who would be an even more effective Susanna if she could get herself to put her hands on her hips only half as many times as she does; and new, finally, was the Cherubino of Risë Stevens, who acted the part quite well though without the charm of Novotna, but who expressed emotion in her sing-

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ing not by suitable inflection of phrase but by huge gulps and gasps and wrenchings of her voice away from the ends of the phrases.

February 20, 1943

Lotte Lehmann's singing of Schumann lieder, including the great *Dichterliebe* cycle, provided the New Friends of Music audience with a memorable experience. The generalization about opera-singers being unable to sing lieder properly is as dangerous as any other. The most beautiful singing of these songs that I have heard—in which, that is, rich musical and poetic expressiveness was conveyed in phrases that were formed with plastic perfection—was that of an opera-singer, Elisabeth Schumann. And there was similar plastic perfection in the phrasing of the songs when Rethberg sang them. Lehmann, however, when she first sang them, did throw her voice and emotions around in them as she was accustomed to doing in opera; and it is only recently, as time has sharply reduced the once unlimited quantities of luscious tone at her disposal and compelled her to use what was left with care, restraint, and skill, that the operatic characteristics have been refined out of her phrasing of lieder. At the New Friends concert the high register which used to be constricted and shrill was now open and agreeable. And there was very little of the explosive emotional vehemence that used to tear the phrase apart: unable to afford this easy way of expressing emotion directly, she now expressed it through subtilized inflection of the line of the phrase, which remained continuous and unbroken even at points of great emotional intensity. The result was a flow of characteristically beautiful vocal sound which charmed the ear, embodying wonderfully deep and rich poetic insights and emotions which moved the mind and heart.

March 6, 1943

Bernard Shaw, writing in 1892, speaks of Verdi's *Trovatore*, *Ballo in Maschera*, *Ernani*, and so on as "that ultra-classical

product of Romanticism, the grandiose Italian opera in which the executive art consists in a splendid display of personal heroics, and the drama arises out of the simplest and most universal stimulants to them." Having defined the executive art they require, he ascribes the popular misconception of them to "performances in which the superb distinction and heroic force of the male characters, and the tragic beauty of the women, have been burlesqued by performers with every sort of disqualification for such parts, from age and obesity to the most excruciating phases of physical insignificance and modern cockney vulgarity." Describing them as "that dynasty of execrable impostors in tights and tunics, interpolating their loathsome B flats into the beautiful melodies they could not sing, and swelling with conceit when they were able to finish *Di quella pira* with a high C capable of making a stranded man-of-war recoil off a reef into mid-ocean," he says that to blame Verdi is "much as if Dickens had blamed Shakespeare for the absurdities of Mr. Wopsle."

Today at the Metropolitan one hears *La Forza del Destino* conducted by Bruno Walter with respect, affection, care, and musical understanding; one hears the work as a whole, treated in this way, come into existence with validity, power, style; one hears not only the dramatic force of the music but its loveliness, its exquisitely wrought delicacy. But the "superb distinction and heroic force of the male characters and the tragic beauty of the women" are still burlesqued by the unimpressive appearance, the lunging and clutching and arm-waving of Kurt Baum, Leonard Warren, and Zinka Milanov, whom I heard at an evening performance; by the bellowing of Mr. Baum throughout the evening, except for the few moments when he lay wounded and, singing quietly, sang with surprising beauty of voice and phrasing; by the occasional shouting of Mr. Warren, who when he did not shout charmed the ear with the rich sonority of his voice; by the occasional tremolo-ridden shrieking of Miss Milanov, who at other times produced sounds of ravish-

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ing beauty. Ezio Pinza, on the other hand, was, as always, impressive in appearance, movement, and singing.

The lunging and clutching and arm-waving don't occur only in performances of Verdi's operas; they are the absurd clichés and mannerisms to which most singers reduce the plastic movement that is—like the singing of the words which makes it necessary—one of the expressive means, one of the conventions of opera. In itself this convention is no more absurd than any other; it becomes absurd only when it is absurdly used; and what dignity, expressiveness, and force it can have one may observe in the Orfeo, the Fricka, the Marina of Kerstin Thorborg. And what it can be when it is the medium of one of those singing actors who command stage and audience like sovereigns by their mere presence, their imagination and feeling, their communicative intensity, one may observe in the Leonore, the Marschallin, the Elisabeth, the Sieglinde of Lotte Lehmann. One may observe them, that is, in so far as the Metropolitan permits; and one of the things the Metropolitan has to answer for is the fact that during the years when Lehmann was still singing Leonore in Salzburg the American public was deprived of an impersonation which takes its place in operatic history with things like Chaliapin's Boris.

The Metropolitan's production of Strauss's *Rosenkavalier*, however, still offers Lehmann's Marschallin, which remains a wonderful and affecting achievement even though much of the subtle detail of the impersonation and much of the singing do not reach a person in row Z of the huge auditorium. It creates, in fact, the one bit of reality and truth not only amid the clutter of cliché and mannerism of the performance but amid the clutter of the trashy work itself. Of the other principals in the performance I attended Eleanor Steber, when she got rid of an initial tremolo, sang the part of Sophie exquisitely; Risë Stevens, the Octavian, did not get rid of her tremolo throughout the evening; Emanuel List half-talked his way through the part of Baron Ochs with the quavering remains of a voice;

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Julius Huehn's Faninal was one of the Metropolitan's most grotesque errors in casting; and Elwood Gary sang the Italian aria well. Having read about Erich Leinsdorf's unauthoritative conducting, I watched and listened to his work very attentively, and found it technically expert and authoritative and musically effective. But then I have no ax to grind.

March 13, 1943

If at 6:29 in the afternoon of February 28 you noticed your dog stirring restlessly and whining in his sleep and you felt uneasy yourself, that was because at this moment *The Nation's* music critic was near death from the most lethally dull of Bach's Sonatas for unaccompanied cello, No. 5 in C minor, which was being played at the final concert of the New Friends of Music by Luigi Silva, an excellent cellist and musician who on this occasion intensified the effect of the music by playing it with the driest tone I have ever heard produced from a cello. Two minutes more and it would have been all over with me; but at 6:30—that was when Rover leaped up with a joyous yelp—Bach and Mr. Silva stopped, and Haydn and the Budapest Quartet resumed; and so I am alive to write the exciting story.

That concert illustrated an old New Friends weakness in program-making—the inability to distinguish between the works of great composers that are worth playing and the ones that should be left in obscurity. The concert a week before illustrated an old weakness in selection of artists. The New Friends' claim has always been that it—and it alone—attracts audiences with music, not with performers, and that having decided to give, say, Schumann's *Dichterliebe* or Bach's *Goldberg* Variations, it then looks for exactly the right artist for the particular work. Actually the New Friends, like other organizations, has always announced lists of performers along with its lists of works, in order to attract the audiences it would not have attracted otherwise. And for *Dichterliebe* it engaged Lotte Lehmann, who in

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addition to having box-office appeal is famous for her singing of the work; but for the *Goldberg* Variations on February 21 it engaged not Wanda Landowska but Rudolf Serkin, and did so not because of his reputation for competence in the work but because of his ability to fill the hall. The intense emotion which Mr. Serkin felt about the music was evident in the upflung arms which threatened to hit him in the eye and the gyrating body which threatened to slip off the chair, but not in the *Allegretto* rippling-off of those three great variations in minor which have so different a meaning and effect when played slowly and phrased with powerful tensions and momentums; nor did he reveal greater adequacy and comprehension in the tempos, phrasing, and style of the other variations, some of which he played with dazzling virtuosity. Nor was the choice of Busch and Serkin for performances of sonatas on February 14 an ideal one: they play together with remarkable feeling for ensemble performance, and Serkin does his best playing when stimulated and restrained by Busch; but he in turn does not seem to be able to stimulate Busch into producing something better than the thin, wiry tone and pallid phrasing that were heard in Bach's E major Sonata, and their playing in this great work was, as it often is, unimpressively small-scale.

March 20, 1943

The fourteen New York Philharmonic-Symphony players whose contracts have not been renewed have admitted the deterioration in the playing of the orchestra which Toscanini, when he was its conductor, said was the greatest he had ever conducted; but they have charged that they were being made the scapegoats for the errors which had caused this deterioration—the management's errors first in engaging "a young and talented man" who could not handle "the tremendous burden of a complete season's work," then in trying "a bewildering variety" of guest conductors, each with his "pet hobby horses and . . . modern works" that could not be adequately rehearsed. And on the

other hand they have charged the management with "premeditated and cultivated terrorism for years, with waves of firings anticipating any demands for betterment of contract," and have contended that the present dismissals are part of the management's tactics in its attempt to cut the length of the season. By the management I take it they have meant both the board of directors and Arthur Judson, the business manager; and Mr. Judson specifically they have charged with neglecting the best interest of the orchestra for the best interest of Columbia Concerts Corporation, through which he manages conductors and other concert artists. As for Artur Rodzinski, the newly engaged permanent conductor of the orchestra, they have contended that he recommended the dismissals "for reasons of intrigue and politics and not for the good of the orchestra," and that the recommendations represented "the arbitrary caprices of a man . . . well known . . . as completely unstable temperamentally." And as protection against all this they have demanded a committee of the orchestra empowered to review these and future dismissals.

It is true that in engaging Barbirolli, in giving a minor English conductor of a provincial Scottish orchestra a three-year contract as sole permanent conductor of a great orchestra that had been headed by Toscanini, in doing this not merely after he had been here a few weeks on trial and had exhibited his undistinguished achievements but even, secretly, before he had come here, in re-engaging him for two more years even after those three years of amply demonstrated mediocrity, in passing over Beecham while it engaged a Mitropoulos and even an Eferem Kurtz as guest conductor—in all this the management has proved its unfitness to control the orchestra's affairs. Nor has it proved its fitness now in my opinion, by engaging a man whose work has shown him to be a good drillmaster but a coarse-grained musician. By the management I too mean both the directors and Mr. Judson; for I think it reasonable to assume that where the directors' qualifications for their posts are their

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money, business standing, or social position, Mr. Judson's activity has not been limited to issuing stamps and petty cash. And with no knowledge of particular incidents which the fourteen players may have in mind I think it reasonable for them to contend that the man who has conducted and other artists for hire should not have anything to do with the hiring of conductors and other artists for the orchestra.

On the other hand the charge of waves of firings to terrorize the men is untrue: there have been, since the 1928 merger, only the few replacements that are normally made in an orchestra each year. And if one examines this year's list one finds that seven of the fourteen men have been playing in the New York Symphony and Philharmonic for periods long enough to make it credible that they are being retired and pensioned for age and lessened competence; one has been associate solo horn for the past two seasons, and presumably made his contribution to the sour notes I heard in Berlioz's *Queen Mab*; and one was tried as solo trombone this season, and may also have proved unsatisfactory. That leaves five, including the concertmaster: hardly a mass firing, and not without possible explanation.

At the time when the Philharmonic-Symphony was conducted by Toscanini and was a great orchestra there were men who liked to play under him; but there were also men who disliked it and who were glad to see him go. They could tell you of his rages; but he could tell you of their enraging indolence and unwillingness to put into their work the intensity of effort that he put into his. What with his personal force and rages and disciplinary power he compelled them to play like a great orchestra; but the next week one attended a concert at which they were conducted by a man with less personal force and no disciplinary power, one saw the concertmaster relax comfortably in his chair and the others behind him do likewise, and one heard playing in which one could not recognize the orchestra that Toscanini thought so great. This illustrated the conflict of wills

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that is involved in the conducting of any orchestra—but also the lack in these particular men of the pride in their standing that has caused the Boston and Philadelphia men to maintain a minimum excellence under other conductors than Koussevitzky and Stokowski. In this conflict the Philharmonic-Symphony men lost to Toscanini, but won over the others, and continued to win over Barbirolli and some of the recent guest conductors; and they are now trying to win over Rodzinski. They talk of the management's errors; but the men who were glad to see Toscanini go in 1936 were glad to see Barbirolli come; they had a grand time with him, and continued to have a grand time with the guest conductors, and would like to go on having a grand time with Rodzinski. Faced with a conductor who has been given disciplinary power and has begun to use it, they are executing a maneuver to deprive him of it. If they are successful and he surrenders on these and future dismissals I can't see him achieving much with the orchestra; if he wins he will have to work with a sullen orchestra; but even in the best circumstances his achievements would be limited by his capacities. In the best circumstances we would not get another Boston or Philadelphia Orchestra; for that we would have to have a different orchestra, a different conductor, and—while we were at it—a different board of directors and a different business manager.

April 3, 1943

A newspaperman had occasion to remark to me recently: "Because publishers were so damned anxious for the public to buy everything they published, they brought pressure against a reviewer who wrote that a book was bad. As a result we have book columnists and reviewers for whom everything published has merit—and to whom nobody pays any attention." I mention his remark because it applies to record-reviewing. With few exceptions record-company executives dislike the reviewer who creates in his readers the confidence that will cause them to buy

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what he tells them is good—who creates this confidence by telling them also when he thinks something is bad. They dislike him because they want to sell everything they produce, and regard the review as only an additional kind of publicity material for that purpose—a kind for which the payment is the sample records that are sent to the reviewer gratis; and, as they have been quoted to me, “why should we give expensive records to someone who knocks them?” The reviewer they like is the one who can hear only good in the records, or who cannot believe evil even when he hears it—who, if Columbia’s recording of Sibelius’s First is so bad that he must say “the orchestra does not come through as richly as the Philadelphia” does in the Victor recording, hastens to add “that may be because of an inferior recording [i.e., copy] that reached us” *—and who certainly would have no influence on my buying if I had to depend on someone’s judgment. And what with the reviewers who have good ears but poor machines, the ones with good machines but no ears, the ones with no ears and bad machines, the ones with a desire to have the records and a willingness to be agreeable for them—most reviews are the kind that record-company executives like.

It doesn’t make things any easier for the man who must report that a recording is technically defective, to have reviewers for important publications pronounce it technically excellent. Not only that, but since records are released only when approved by the artist, the reviewer is in the uncomfortable position of finding fault with recording that has been passed by Stokowski, by Serkin, by Bruno Walter, by the Budapest Quartet. But now Beecham has publicly repudiated the defective recordings of his performances of Sibelius’s Seventh and other works with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony; and the report of his suit to prevent their sale was published only a day before one New York reviewer pronounced the recording of the Sibelius Seventh “well made technically” and another found it

* Howard Taubman in the *New York Times*.

"good, although not quite so expansively resonant as Victor's." And so you can understand why I have had candles burning before a picture of Beecham ever since.

May 1, 1943

At a performance of *Aida* at the Metropolitan in 1936-37 I had as my guest a lady newly arrived from Europe; and I spent the evening writhing in embarrassment over the singing of the thrown-together odds and ends of a cast, the conducting of a Papi thrown in at the last minute, the shabby rags of palaces and temples that rippled in the Metropolitan's back-stage breezes, the confusion of costumes, the absurdities of stage management. "All my life," said my guest, "I have waited to hear an opera at the world-famous Metropolitan; at last the day arrives; and I hear a performance which one would not hear even in Peretola"—this being a little place outside Florence, and apparently the archetype of the Italian provincial town.

A few weeks ago I attended a post-season performance of *Aida* at the Metropolitan. In the intervening years the Metropolitan's standards of performance had risen: great works had been carefully prepared, intelligently staged, well sung, conducted by distinguished men. But in *Aida* there were still the rags of palaces and temples rippling in the breezes, the confusion of costumes, the absurdities of stage-management; there were, in the cast, two first-rate singing actors, Pinza and Thorborg, but also Baum, Warren, Roman: Baum, singing well, but rocking on his feet a couple of times as he assumed an attitude of benevolent interest in the goings-on about him, and funnier when he expressed agitation with a few quick staggers and a clutch at the heart; Warren, driving his fine voice and lunging about the stage darkly; Roman—her arms and dumpy figure in a constant state of awkward motion—singing with recently acquired freedom and steadiness, with beauty and fulness of tone, but without much concern for beginning a phrase at the same time as the orchestra, and with outspreading arms calling on the galleries to witness

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how her voice opened up on high C in the middle of a phrase and held it—while Pelletier held the orchestra until she let go.

May 15, 1943

At the Duke Ellington concert in Carnegie Hall someone was overheard to say: "The trouble with tonight's concert is that sophistication has reared its ugly head." I would say the trouble was pretentiousness as well as sophistication, and that they had reared their heads long before this concert. One can hear this in the performances reissued by Victor in *A Duke Ellington Panorama*. The 1927 and 1928 performances were recorded by an orchestra of ten, the 1930 performances by an orchestra of twelve; and though the arranged ensembles and backgrounds are skilfully contrived they are quite simple in style and in harmony, they leave plenty of room for the soloists to play with freedom and at length, and the entire performances have the relaxed freedom and vitality of jazz performance. By 1934 Ellington had expanded his orchestra and had been talked into thinking of himself as an American composer; and in the performances of that year one hears already the harmonically lush and stylistically luxuriant arrangements which envelop and hold down the players' imaginations and rob the entire performance of spontaneity and vigor.

The Carnegie Hall concert was not the horror that the *Spirituals to Jazz* affair of the *New Masses* was a few years ago; but it was bad enough. There were this time not a dozen vaudeville acts constantly pushing each other on and off and around the stage, but only one orchestra dressed up and put through tricks like a trained-monkey act; there was this time only the professional master-of-ceremonies glibness of Ellington himself; and there was only the one gilt-and-plush luxuriance in which even the early *Black and Tan Fantasy* and *Rockin' in Rhythm* were now enveloped, and by which the soloists were strangled, except for a few moments like the one near the end when Lawrence Brown freshened the atmosphere with a freely-moving hot

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trombone solo. But it was hard to take for a whole evening; and hardest of all was the forty-five-minute stretch of *Black, Brown, and Beige*. This was described as "a tone parallel to the history of the Negro in America," and based on the idea that since the American Negro had produced a distinctive music called jazz, jazz was the medium in which to express in musical terms everything that had happened to the American Negro, from his being brought here in slavery to the fact that today, as Ellington put it, "the black, brown, and beige is right in there with the red, white, and blue." Actually the work had no evident relation to the history of the Negro in America; and taken for itself it was the product of a man attempting large-scale thought and construction with powers adequate for the four minutes of *Lazy Rhapsody*—which is to say that it was an unintegrated succession of one thing after another for forty-five minutes.

June 12, 1943

My report on the lethally dull performance of Bach's Suite No. 5 by Luigi Silva brought me a letter from a young member of the armed forces who had attended the concert while on leave. Encountering Virgil Thomson after the concert, he writes, "I asked him would he mind telling me what did he think of the cello playing, and he said he thought it was the most wonderful in the world and asked me what did I feel about it and . . . I answered quite sincerely that maybe I was prejudiced because I was a cellist but that I thought it was incredibly dull. Whereupon all the way to Times Square I was regaled with a lot of nonsense about the secret of Bach was you should do his bowings upside down with a modern bow and the color of the Suite No. 5 is marvelous because the low A removes the sudden change in quality across the strings and that the variety of color was in the *score di tura* whatever that might be and then the next day the *Tribune* carried the final say on the subject, which you can or have read for yourself."

JUNE 12, 1943

My warmest thanks to my correspondent; and will he now write me a letter about Mr. Thomson's recent fantasy-spinning on the French style. For this calls for my correspondent's technique, rather than my own mere presentation of such facts as the flatness and insipidity of Casadesus's phrasing of the long cantilena in the middle section of the slow movement of Mozart's Concerto K.595, as against the life created in the phrases by the contours and tensions of Schnabel's phrasing (and for Casadesus substitute any other French pianist); or the stolidity of the Cortot-École Normale performances of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, as against the buoyancy and sparkle of the Busch Chamber Players' performances; or that the greatest phrasing and style we have heard has been that of musicians who have not been French by birth or, as far as I know, by training—Casals, Toscanini, Schnabel, Beecham, Szigeti, Landowska, Hempel, Matzenauer, Rethberg, Schumann.

In the preoccupation with what this war has done to whole populations in Poland, Greece, Yugoslavia, Norway, there has been a neglect of the havoc it has created in the lives of our expatriate musicians in tearing them away from the culture embodied in those Paris concerts under the patronage of Princess This and Marquise That at which was played the latest piece by Satie or Sauguet or Markevitch or one of the expatriates, and in compelling them to return to a land in which the public—the wisps of hay clinging to its hair, the cow-dung to its boots—stamps into Carnegie Hall to listen to Beethoven performed by Toscanini. And the courage with which exiled Europeans in this country have fitted together again the pieces of their broken lives is not more touching than the persistence that recently produced a bit of old Paris at the Museum of Modern Art—the Serenades sponsored by a committee with a Marquise and a Prince, and devoted to "rare music ancient and modern."

The rare ancient music at the first concert turned out to be Mozart's G minor Quintet; the modern music was rarer, and I hope will be even more so, including as it did Debussy's So-

nata for flute, viola, and harp, which is one of those late exercises in Debussyan style in a vacuum; a new Piano Quartet by Martinu, which provided another example of this composer's ability to spin out nothing much into nothing much more; and Virgil Thomson's Seven Choruses from the *Medea* of Euripides, on which the texts of Euripides (in Countee Cullen's translation) themselves constituted an annihilating commentary.

At the second concert there were to have been a rare harpsichord concerto of Mozart and symphony of Méhul; instead there were Mozart's early G minor Symphony, of which the performance conducted by Beecham was very exciting, and Bach's great Concerto in D minor, with the solo part played on the harpsichord by Ralph Kirkpatrick with an ostentatious lack of feeling for either the music or the instrument. And there was a Little Suite of Handel-Beecham, which turned out to be too big and with too much Beecham in the arrangement.

The third concert began with what was described as the first New York performance of Revueltas's *Homage to García Lorca*, which turned out to be the atrocious music used in the Ballet Theater's *Don Domingo*. Then came Paul Bowles's *The Wind Remains*, described as a "zarzuela in one act, after García Lorca, adapted by the composer," which, as it was staged with painfully amateurish actors, carried incoherence to the point of sheer lunacy. There was also to have been an opera buffa, *Pedro Malazarte*, by Camargo Guarnieri; instead there was *El Café de Chinitas*, a ballet based on a folksong recorded by Lorca, which was danced and sung by Argentinita and her company, and which was delightful. And at that point, looking ahead to what the last two concerts of the series promised, I stopped.

El Café de Chinitas was presented later as part of the Spanish Festival that Mr. Hurok put on for two nights at the Metropolitan Opera House. There it suffered from the huge size of the auditorium and even more from the gigantic Dali décor which had been designed as usual to prevent the eye from looking at anything else. In this expanded version the finest Spanish male dancer I have seen in recent years, Juan Martinez, made

JUNE 19, 1943

a brief appearance, in addition to José Greco and Manolo Vargas who danced superbly with Argentinita and Pilar López all evening.

June 19, 1943

Mark Woods, president of the Blue Network, was reported by the *Times* to have said that in commissioning Roy Harris to write a Sixth Symphony he had "made no demands or even suggestions"—don't applaud yet—"other than to hope that since he is essentially a man of the soil and one of our own his Sixth Symphony will be dedicated to the American fighting forces, and that it will be a symbol of the struggle which our nation is making and has made throughout its eventful history for the freedom of mankind." Only a hope; and such a modest little hope, too; and right up the alley of the Shostakovitch of America, who on any occasion of blood and tears stands ready and eager to commune publicly with his soul in forty-five minutes of incoherently bombastic sound accompanied by several pages of program-notes about why he did it and how he did it. In accepting the commission, reported the *Times*, "Mr. Harris said he would compose a 'major moral symphony' that would dwell on the Lincoln era, as significant today as were the trying times of Lincoln's presidency." I can hear it already; and I can hear Mr. Harris telling us what he did to make it moral, and what he did to make it Lincoln, and so on.

My ears are still aching from the Fifth Symphony, in which Mr. Harris told a world that had to know how he had been affected by the heroism of the Russian people. It was broadcast by the N.B.C. Symphony under Frank Black; and I heard it while waiting for Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*. Copland, unlike Harris, is a man of musical talent; one has been aware of his command of his medium even when it produced ugly and repellent works; and for the ballets *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo* it produced music that was fine-sounding and engaging. The

JULY 3, 1943

music of *A Lincoln Portrait* is of this style, and could be used for another ballet like *Billy* or *Rodeo*; but in this piece its use and effect are those of incidental music in a play—to create an impressive atmosphere for the words of Lincoln. These words are well chosen; but I squirmed at the business of “He was six feet tall, and he said.”

July 3, 1943

It was in 1931 that Gershwin's *Second Rhapsody*, originally called *Rhapsody in Rivets*, led me to reflect on the fallacious notion that since American life included jazz and riveting, the music which “expresses” this life also had to include them.

This led me to the Russian parallel. A review in the *Moscow News* of a Suite from Shostakovitch's *Golden Age* had criticized him for not “utilizing in the service of the revolution and socialist construction all the mastery and technique which have been inherited from the old musical culture” and for failing “to affirm Soviet musical ideology”; and the question arose, what precisely was meant by utilizing musical technique in the service of the revolution and socialist construction, or by affirming Soviet musical ideology? I could see how literature might serve the revolution and socialist construction by using them as its material—since it must refer to phenomena of the physical world; and I could see how a song might do so through its words, a ballet through its action. But not music, or at any rate not the music which conveyed only states of feeling, and which, since it did not refer to the physical world, did not contain within itself anything that could be socialistic or capitalistic. The one kind of music that did refer to the physical Russian scene was music like Mossolov's *Iron Foundry*; but this was hardly different from Honegger's *Pacific* 231; in addition it was unimportant, unsatisfying as music; and we were told by Sergei Radamsky that even the Russian workers did not like it because they heard enough noise in the factories. And Radamsky told us how the composer served socialist construction in symphonic

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works: he used an idiom that expressed "the Russian worker's and peasant's simplicity and directness in melody and rhythm," and in this way created "music for all and not for a few intellectuals." In other words, the worker and the peasant were not to be allowed to share the advantages of the intellectual and the artist; the intellectual and the artist were to be made to share the disadvantages of the worker and peasant.

This train of thought was brought back to my mind by Nicholas Nabokov's recent article ⁴⁰ on Shostakovitch, in *Harper's*. Nabokov tells us of his first impressions of Shostakovitch's early works—that they were skilful but not particularly new or imaginative; and that in Shostakovitch's development since then, including the "two painful years of banishment from public life . . . years of 'inner self-criticism' (as the Soviet press calls it) . . . *all* of his original musical thinking was definitely swallowed up by the 'service to the cause'" that required "a redundant, blatant, and unconvincing optimism" in the form of "excessive and very conventional use of major triads, tunes and cadences in major keys, all of them describing the glorious and victorious events of the present in the most emphatic and banal musical language (minor modes are used to describe the dark and gloomy days of the past)," and of "a verbose and brassy style which soon becomes dreary and monotonous."

I have heard it argued that the damage to Shostakovitch might be a price worth paying for the social gain in the increased musical literacy achieved by having him write on the level of understanding of the masses. I should say first of all that in my opinion Shostakovitch's is not a case of music which promised to develop into something good but was made bad by political pressures: it was bad and had in it the promise of continued badness; and the pressures only made it worse. But the case might have been that of a potential Bach or Beethoven or Mozart; for all we know a composer of that magnitude may have been ruined in Russia; and I contend that the musical literacy of the masses did not require any such sacrifice: if simple music was needed for simple minds and tastes there was more than

enough of it available, and no need of making the best serious composers produce blatant banalities.

I have heard it argued also that it may be good for a composer to be compelled to write for an audience—any audience, even a mass audience. It is such schematizations that lead to the ideological ferocities of Russia during the past fifteen years. One begins, that is, with a streamlined schematization which has it that a composer must function in relation to an audience if he is to function well; instead of beginning with the mixed-up realities of how a composer produces valuable music or does not produce it, wins an audience with his music or does not win it. And one ends with attempting to get the composer to produce valuable music by placing him in a relation with an audience and compelling him to compose blatant banalities for it.

If one wanted a science like mathematical physics to exist for all and not for a few intellectuals one would accomplish this by educating workers and peasants to the point where they could understand the matters which an Einstein is concerned with, not by compelling him to concern himself only with what workers and peasants can understand. Or if one wanted to make the masses literate in the subject one would not set an Einstein to writing elementary texts for them. Nor would one think it might be good for him to have to do his thinking for an audience—any audience, even a mass audience.

Postscript, August 3, 1946

As a matter of fact the Russians understand this about mathematics and physics. They would be outraged by Roger Fry's view that "it is only by working for himself that the artist can work for mankind"; but such a view governs their treatment of mathematicians and physicists, who are allowed to serve all the people not by plunging into swirling social currents and operating on the level of understanding of the wide masses, but by carrying on their investigations in the privacy of their studies and laboratories and on the level of their own understanding.

JULY 24, 1943

That is the way to get science from the scientists (and incidentally, as the Russians understand, to get the artillery that helped them to defeat their enemies). And it is the way to get art from the artists.

The Great State, said Fry, properly would be "an organization for leisure—out of which art grows; . . . only a purely bureaucratic Socialism . . . would attempt to control the aesthetic lives of men." And it was this bureaucratic socialism that he feared. He was aware of the waste of talent under the present system—but also of the blind chance it permitted that a Shelley might have an income, a Cézanne a farmhouse to retire to. "Bureaucratic Socialism would, it seems, take away even this blind chance that mankind may benefit by its least appreciable, most elusive treasures, and would organize into a universal and all-embracing tyranny the already overweening and disastrous power of endowed official art."

Astounding that in 1912 Fry should have prophesied those paintings of *Stalin Halting the Cowardly Flight of Trotsky from the Battlefield of Tsaritsin*, *Stalin Demonstrating to the Leningrad Academy of Sciences that $E = mc^2$* , *Stalin Receiving the Pleas of Churchill and Roosevelt for Assistance at Teheran*, *Ivan the Terrible Gently Admonishing His Son for Cutting Off the Ears of His Pet Rabbit*—and their musical counterparts.

July 24, 1943

Experience has taught me that the broadcasting- and record-company mind and my own are mutually baffling. Perhaps I should say the business mind; but that wouldn't be correct. The purpose of business being, as I understand fully, to make money, there is the business mind which makes its money by selling a useful and good product like bicarbonate of soda or a new discovery like the sulfa compounds; and I understand that. Then there is the business mind which makes its money by selling something worthless like Prudence Powderfeather's Mystic Elixir; and I understand that. But there is also the business

JULY 31, 1943

mind which thinks that the fact that it sells hundreds of thousands of bottles of the Mystic Elixir makes the Elixir a good product, its manufacture a noble act of public benefaction, and any attack on it an outrage, contending that an expert who conducts a health and medicine column should write about the Elixir from the point of view of the hundreds of thousands of women who find it helpful, not from the point of view of one expert who finds it to be three parts mud and one part colored water. And that mind I find baffling.

So with records. There is the English record-company mind which makes money with products as good as the English recordings of Furtwängler and Beecham and the pre-war English pressings of these recordings; and I understand that. Then there is the mind of one American record-company executive—the only one of his kind I have encountered—who is willing to make money with bad recordings, bad pressings, bad needles if people are willing to buy them; and I understand that. But there is the mind of some other executives of record companies which produce good and bad, and offer both equally as the best—who, when they have sold large quantities of a bad recording or of bad pressings to people without the ears and the machines to know what they were buying, think that this makes the records good, their manufacture an act worthy of praise, and adverse criticism a manifestation of a viciously ignoble nature, contending that an expert who conducts a record column should write about the records from the point of view of the hundreds of thousands of people with defective ears and defective machines who find them satisfactory, not from the point of view of an expert with good ears and a good machine who hears their defects. That mind I find baffling; and Beecham seems to have had trouble understanding it too.

July 31, 1943

Having mentioned the idea of record company executives that record criticism should be written from the viewpoint of the

JULY 31, 1943

large number of people with poor ears and poor machines, not from the viewpoint of the expert with good ears and a good machine, I should go on to say that a similar idea has grown up more generally in recent years about all writing on music. In the old days it was thought that an editor or publisher should publish the writing of a man who could give his readers the benefit of insight, judgment, and taste greater than theirs, making them aware of what they could not perceive themselves. But recently there has grown up the idea that the right man to talk about music to the ordinary person is the one with no more insight, judgment, or taste than the person he is writing for. That is the way some of the men who have begun to write music reviews and books recently have justified their writing, and I have noted that their judgment and taste were as undistinguished as they claimed, but that this did not make the writing profitable.*

As for Beecham's difficulty in understanding the American record-company mind, I have learned that only a very few artists have the clause in their contract that gives them the right to veto a recording they consider defective—the few being of course those who can compel the companies to give it to them. And I have been told that it was because Beecham did not have this clause in his contract that he got into his difficulty with Columbia and in the end had to give up his law-suit. It may be that he didn't have the clause in his contract with English Columbia either; if so it was probably because he didn't need it—because a company which produced those beautiful English recordings of his performances of Mozart and Delius and Tchaikovsky would not have wanted to issue a recording which he considered defective. After this he must have found it diffi-

* [1948] If you think I made this all up here is the statement by John Briggs of the *New York Post* in a recent article in *Tomorrow*—that the critic “is the mouthpiece for that great submerged mass of concert-goers who have opinions but no way of expressing them,” that he “must share the tastes, viewpoint, enthusiasms and prejudices of his readers,” and that “he might well share their limitations also.”

cult to understand and deal with a company which, having produced a bad recording of Sibelius's Seventh, insisted on issuing it when he objected to it, and which continued to sell it and feature it in its advertising even after he had repudiated it publicly—to say nothing of the statement by a Columbia executive that Beecham didn't know anything about recording.

From this we can see that it isn't only Beecham who is baffled by the American record-company mind; the American record-company executives are no less baffled and exasperated by attitudes like Beecham's. Years ago I accounted for the enormous superiority, at the time, of British broadcasting of music over American by the fact that in England broadcasting was run by men who because music meant a great deal to them could therefore understand and believe that it meant a great deal to others, whereas here broadcasting was run by business, advertising, and publicity men to whom music meant nothing and who therefore could not understand or believe that it meant anything to anyone else. So with recording: the men who run the business of recording in this country are utterly unable to understand what music means to someone like Beecham or Toscanini, how it sounds in his mind, how it must sound to his ear; and they are baffled when they produce a recording that will sell, and he objects to it or, if it is Toscanini, refuses to permit its sale, merely because the reproduced sound is muddy or badly balanced or mixed with noises from bad processing. That is why so few recordings of Toscanini's performances have come out recently; and though we have the means of preserving the performances of one of the most extraordinary musicians of all time, we may in the end be left with only a handful of recordings, and even some of these defective.

But if the record-company mind is baffled and angered by these attitudes in a celebrated musician like Beecham or Toscanini, how can it understand similar attitudes in a mere music critic, who should be grateful for the expensive records he is sent gratis, and who instead complains that the reproduced

AUGUST 21, 1943

sound is muddy or badly balanced or mixed with noises from bad processing?

August 21, 1943

Toscanini's July broadcast of another Verdi program offered a number of familiar pieces—*O don fatale* from *Don Carlos*, *Pace, pace, mio dio* from *La Forza del Destino*, *Eri tu* from *Un Ballo in Maschera*, the entire last act of *Rigoletto* with its famous quartet—in performances which molded and integrated vocal line and orchestral context in a style that made their dramatic expressiveness and power breath-taking. These performances made it especially fascinating to follow the course of each piece—the powerful introductory passage and accompaniment figure of the orchestra, the beautiful and expressive melodic line of the voice, the single woodwind joining the voice at a salient point in this line, the other wind instruments entering to create a texture around the voice in its further progress (these instrumental counterpoints were things one heard in the studio but not over the air, where microphone placement caused them to be blanketed by the voices). Following in this way one was aware of magnificent pieces of dramatic music taking shape in those arias, that final act, that quartet; and one marveled again and again at the evidence of Verdi's feeling for his medium, his skill and taste in its use, in the service of the dramatic situation.

Webster Aitken's performance of Beethoven's *Diabelli* Variations at a Frick Collection summer concert proved to be one of the great events of the year. The performance at his debut about seven years ago left one astonished by the manifestations of maturity in the playing of so young a man; but this time one was even more astonished by the evidence of greater maturity of understanding and emotion in a performance at once more expansive and more integrated—by this in combination with the youthful verve that manifested itself right at the

AUGUST 28, 1943

start in the rhythmic incisiveness, the buoyancy, the glints of humor in the statement of Diabelli's waltz. At a later Frick Collection concert the same expansive and integrating shaping produced a magnificently powerful statement of the first movement of Schubert's Sonata Op. 78; and while I do not share Aitken's conception of the subsequent movements—I feel them to be easy-going and relaxed, which he does not—I enjoyed the superb things he made of them in accordance with his own conception, especially the verve, the strength, the humor that he put into the last movement. At this second concert he also played a number of pieces by Debussy; and as one of those who used to think of Giesecking's miraculously achieved pastels as the last word in Debussy performance I was amazed again to hear how much more Aitken's imagination discovered in those pieces and conveyed through his more robust and rich-sounding sonorities. And these were pieces and performances which demonstrated his superb mastery of his instrument. As our musical life is organized his playing may be heard by a handful of people at the Frick Collection, but it is nevertheless among the greatest there is to be heard.

August 28, 1943

For many years I knew only Ravel's orchestral version of Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and took for granted that it must be more effective than the original work for piano—accepting too uncritically the prevailing idea that the orchestra did this sort of thing better than the piano. Then about seven years ago I heard Frank Sheridan play the original, and was amazed to discover that Musorgsky achieved with the piano everything Ravel achieved with the orchestra. After that I heard only Brailovsky's ineffective recorded performance; but a couple of weeks ago a friend played the work; and the impact of the experience was even stronger than it had been the first time.

AUGUST 28, 1943

An observation of Tovey on Schubert is relevant here: "Neither Shakespeare nor Schubert will ever be understood by any critic or artist who regards their weaknesses and inequalities as proof that they are artists of less than the highest rank. Even if a great artist can be 'written down by himself,' one work of art cannot be written down by another; and even if the artist produces no single work without flaws, yet the highest qualities attained in important parts of a great work are as indestructible by weaknesses elsewhere as if the weaknesses were the accidents of physical ruin." It doesn't matter how many poorer works Musorgsky wrote; the composer of *Pictures at an Exhibition*—of the musical translations of *Goldenberg and Shmuylye*, *Catacombs*, *De Mortuis in Lingua Morta*—was a musical artist of the highest rank. That is evident not only in the imaginative impulse and insight, the conception of end and of means for the end, but in the actual execution of the conception: it doesn't matter where and when Musorgsky was awkward and ineffective; in this work of his maturity—it is dated 1874 and is therefore of the same period as *Boris Godunov*—he writes at every point, in every detail of melody, harmony, figuration, with the unfaltering sureness of a man who is absolute master of his style.

But listening this time with sharpened awareness of Musorgsky's achievement, I also became aware for the first time of what Ravel had achieved. I had always appreciated the insight and finesse of his orchestral translation of the work; what I realized now was the fact that in every detail it is the exact equivalent in orchestral terms of the piano original. I had thought the use of the saxophone for the melody of *The Old Castle* was the one exceptional instance of a desire to shock; but when the passage was played on the piano, there, to my amazement, was the timbre that called for the saxophone. I have no use for Ravel's qualities as a composer; but I have the deepest admiration and gratitude for the imaginative understanding and sympathy and the artistic rectitude that make his

version of *Pictures at an Exhibition* unique among orchestral translations.

With increased appreciation of Musorgsky's and Ravel's achievements came increased realization of the phoniness of Stokowski's statement accompanying his own orchestral version—his usual statement about merely having fulfilled what was implicit and only partly achieved in the original, which in this case he called a mere sketch for piano, and about having "aimed to preserve and express the Slavic character" that Ravel's "Gallic manner" had destroyed. If there were not the evidence of Stokowski's actual "fulfillment," which slashes out whole sections of the work and destroys the meaning and character of the rest with fussy and lush and lurid orchestral sonorities and effects, and if there were not the additional evidence of all his other performances, then his characterization of Musorgsky's original work as a mere sketch and his reference to the "Gallic manner" of Ravel's translation would be enough to establish the fact that he is a "musician" without understanding of music—which is why he can make no other use of his gift for manipulating an orchestra than the equivalent of going into a museum and daubing gaudy paint over the Rembrandts, the Corots, the Cézannes. (Somebody once argued with me that Stokowski could not put any fever or melodrama into Bach or Musorgsky that Bach or Musorgsky had not put there first. In other words, since Bach and Musorgsky had written the notes which Stokowski distorted, they were responsible for the effect which this distortion produced—which was like holding Shakespeare responsible for the effect of an actor's distortion of his lines.)

I should add that it is not only the orchestrators who commit such crimes. My friend played Musorgsky's work from the edition of the original text published in Soviet Russia; but the clerk in the music-store had first offered him a re-arrangement of the work for piano by Harold Bauer, which, my friend said, defaced it as outrageously as Stokowski's orchestral horror.

Hearing the original piano version of *Pictures*, finally, brought home to me more sharply the outstanding crime of this sort—

OCTOBER 23, 1943

Rimsky-Korsakov's revision of *Boris Godunov*.^{*} For the assurance and mastery that I heard at every point in *Pictures* were the assurance and mastery with which Musorgsky wrote at every point in *Boris*, with only one difference: they extended to his writing for the piano in *Pictures*, but not to his writing for the orchestra in *Boris*. Not a note of the melody and harmony in *Boris* should have been changed, therefore; but the miscalculations in orchestration should have been corrected by someone as scrupulous as Ravel. Instead Rimsky-Korsakov changed not only the scoring but the melody, harmony, phraseology, and structure unscrupulously; and even in Soviet Russia, where Musorgsky's original *Boris* was published and produced some years ago, the orchestration recently has been newly coarsened and vulgarized by Shostakovitch.

October 23, 1943

The war, in bringing changes to newspaper staffs, has given New York a first-rate dance critic: Mr. Edwin Denby, who now writes for the *Herald Tribune*. I have made the point a number of times that the important thing in criticism is not the critic's final verdict that something is good or bad but his reasons for the verdict, in which we get the illuminating insights—when he has them—that are his value to us. Mr. Denby has an eye that sees; and looking at anything through this eye is an excitingly illuminating experience—the more so for the seriousness and the warm intensity that his writing communicates.

Readers have inquired from time to time whether I intended to discuss some of the important books of the year. I do; and I regret the time it is taking me to write what I have to say about them. All criticism begins with an experience and ends with a formulation of one's response to the experience (though there

^{*} See page 98.

is, of course, also the large amount of journalistic writing which uses words to conceal what they betray—the fact that the writer has had no experience from what he has heard or seen or read, and no response to it). And the book review—in which one must digest someone else's train of thought in order to fit it into a train of thought of one's own that both restates and evaluates it—is the form of critical writing which I happen to find the most difficult, and which takes me the most time to do.

Stokowski's *Music for All of Us*⁵⁶ I will not discuss: after twenty-five years' observation of the Stokowski performance in action and word I cannot bring myself even to read it. I might suspect the story in broadcasting circles that Stokowski's knob-twiddling took his broadcasts off the air until he was given a dummy control panel to play with, if I had not myself heard in the recent Victor recording of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony how his knob-twiddling took parts of the music off the records; after this, and after some of his atrocious Columbia recordings, I have no interest in Stokowski's dabblings in science. But if you want to know what he has to say in his book about the physical basis of music, here is the summary of his ideas in the review* in the *Times's* Sunday book section: "When he gets around to the physical side of music Mr. Stokowski writes more illuminatingly than most musicians. For his is a bold, far-ranging, searching mind. Not content merely to study and conduct symphonies, he has gone to the roots of his art. He has made himself an expert on the science of sound. More than any other major conductor in this country he knows the science of acoustics and the possibilities of the new fields being opened by scientists. . . . Many other writers have set down their views. But Mr. Stokowski covers the field with a fresh, broad point of view. He tries to state his position as simply as he can, but he does not write down, as many expositors of music for the layman are inclined to do. He respects not only his art but his audience." And if you are interested in knowing the ideas

* By Howard Taubman.

JANUARY 1, 1944

behind Stokowski's butcheries of music in performance, "when Mr. Stokowski discourses on music structure he employs a wide and varied frame of reference. As a conductor he had to cover many epochs, schools, and nations. As a student he has concerned himself with the musical expression of all parts of the world—not merely the Occident, on which our musical culture is based, but the Orient, the South and Central American countries, and the remote cultures which have been carried down, at least partly, to our own time by such groups as the Indians of the Americas." That tells you everything.

January 1, 1944

The opening concert of the Budapest Quartet's series at the Y.M.H.A. began with Haydn's Quartet Opus 76 No. 2; and with the repetition of the first phrase there was already an unexpected change of phrase-length and contour which was only the first little joke in the game that Haydn proceeded to play with the mind of his listener throughout the movement. The subtle surprises continued in the second movement; and their subtlety left one unprepared for the bomb which Haydn exploded in the third-movement minuet: a canon, with the violins leading and the viola and cello following, making one laugh at first with the boldness of the procedure and then with the startling audacities of some of the details of the progression, and getting to be hilariously funny by the end.

Then came Mozart's great C major Quintet K.515, with new surprises and audacities. One may think one has heard all the wonders Mozart could achieve; and then one hears something else which is, one thinks rightly, the most extraordinary thing in music one has ever heard. After the second-act finale of *Figaro* there is still the fourth-act finale (to say nothing of all that intervenes); at the end of this finale there is still the sublimity of the *Contessa, perdono!* passage. And so even after all the unique marvels of the instrumental works—of, for example, the slow movement of the Concerto K.467

—one is unprepared for the boldness and power of the opening of the first movement of the C major Quintet, the tensions that are built up at the end of the exposition; nor do these prepare one for the things that happen in the second-movement minuet: the somber strangeness of the opening statement, of the harmonic progressions and instrumental coloring in the first part of the trio after the flowing violin melody; the violently wrenching intensities of the middle part of the trio. And these things do not make one laugh; they leave one shaken.

The Budapest Quartet's performances of those two works also caused one to marvel all over again at what one had marveled at so many times before—the integrated progression of the four strands of sound that were inflected with such unerring plastic sense and expressive insight. There were occasions, more frequent in the Quintet, when—happening to be very tired—I wondered whether I had really heard a blemish in intonation or tone or had merely imagined I heard it. But unblemished perfection, when it arrived in the performance of Beethoven's Opus 59 No. 1 that ended the concert, created no doubts, and convinced me that I really heard those blemishes in the performances of works which the Budapest Quartet plays less and rehearses less than Opus 59 No. 1. The first movement of Beethoven's work, incidentally, was swift-moving and fiery in this performance, and as convincing as the reflective, lyrical first movement of the Roth Quartet performance.

The New York Philharmonic is now a disciplined, fine-sounding orchestra; that much Rodzinski has achieved. But a disciplined, fine-sounding orchestra doesn't exist for itself; and the conductor's job isn't merely to get it to play with discipline and fine sound. The orchestra exists as an instrument for the performance of music; and the conductor's job is to use it to provide us with effective statements in living sound of the great classics and other interesting works of the past, the important achievements of the present. Actually, Rodzinski's programs have offered few of the great classics or other interesting works of the

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past, and even less music of any importance of the present; and some of the programs have been as badly selected and combined as any I have ever encountered: John Alden Carpenter's *The Anxious Bugler*, Saint-Saëns's Symphony in C minor, Liszt's Piano Concerto in E flat, Gershwin's *American in Paris*; or Berezowsky's *Soldier on the Town*, Glière's Symphony *Ilya Murometz*, Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 3; or Noskowski's Symphonic Poem *Step*, Tansman's Symphony No. 5, Szymanowski's *Symphonie Concertante* for piano and orchestra, Chopin's Concerto in F minor. One might say it is just as well that Rodzinski hasn't played Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, since he doesn't play this music effectively; but that would amount to saying he is incapable of fulfilling one of the primary obligations of orchestra and conductor to the public. Nor is there enough modern music that he plays well to enable him to fulfill other obligations. I have heard good performances from him of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, Sibelius's Fifth Symphony, the Fifth Symphony and other works of Shostakovitch, but a poor performance of Debussy's *La Mer* on the records issued a year ago; and at the concert I attended recently the performance of Mahler's Second Symphony had a cool on-the-surface quality and sheen suitable for Ravel—which was like a performance of *Othello* in the style of a Lonsdale comedy.

January 15, 1944

Around 1890 Bernard Shaw was writing about the "performances of *Lucia* solely to show off Madame Melba's singing," and the opera companies with "five leading tenors and no stage manager. For want of a stage manager, *Orfeo* was murdered. For want of a stage manager, the first act of *Otello* was laid waste. For want of a stage manager, *Tannhäuser* was made a laughing-stock to every German who went to see it. . . ." The recent Monday night performance of *Rigoletto* at the Metropolitan that I attended could have been given for Lily Pons to use the phrases of *Caro nome* to shoot off her vocal fireworks;

and the effect of her china-doll get-up and movements and vocal tones in Verdi's somber and violent work was that of a blockbuster in Berlin. In the cast were two singers, Jan Peerce and Leonard Warren, with superb voices which they abused—Peerce by constriction in production and occasional forcing, Warren by frequent bellowing; and Warren's make-up for the title role was poor, his acting of the lunge-and-clutch variety. There was a conductor, Cesare Sodero, and an excellent one by the evidence of the orchestral portions, or as much as one could hear of them miles away, from row Z in the world's hugest opera house; however, he apparently did not have the authority to impose a musical style on the singing, but had to use his musicianship to create an appearance of musical continuity, style, and sense around the phrase-destroying vocal exhibitionism. There was a stage director, Desire Defrere, who had produced on the stage not dramatic sense but nonsense; but even if he had had the talent to do better he would not have had the authority to deal with Pons's get-up, Warren's lunging and clutching—any more than Dr. Graf once had been able to prevent Lehmann from using a certain negligee in *Der Rosenkavalier* or Tibbett from wrecking the opening scene of *Otello* with his posturing. It was, in sum, a performance which gave one an excellent idea of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Metropolitan as a producer of opera. If the Metropolitan's performances—often employing good singers and conductors, but undisciplined, insufficiently rehearsed, confused, tasteless—are worth saving with the latest \$300,000 which the Metropolitan is asking the public for, it is not because they are something for the world to marvel at but because they are the only ones we have, and moderately good sometimes, and better than nothing.

January 22, 1944

A Chicago reader, who reports that the Chicago Public Library has many of the books of David Ewen and those of Sigmund Spaeth, Charles O'Connell, Deems Taylor, etc., but does not

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have, among others, Tovey's *Essays in Musical Analysis* and some of Ernest Newman's books, goes on to make this comment: "But the influence of the first group is not permanent. I know; for I devoured all of them, adopted their opinions about music I hadn't heard often or at all, and discarded them just as quickly as I began to use my ears and intelligence." The comment establishes one rather important fact—that the critic is subject to check by his reader, or at any rate by the reader who, in the words of my correspondent, "listens to music with good ears and a sound mind." It is, indeed, from this check that the critic gets or fails to get his authority as a critic with his reader. One critic likes Toscanini and not Koussevitzky while another likes Koussevitzky and not Toscanini; the reader then listens for what, in the performances, each critic says he hears and likes or dislikes; he finds it or doesn't find it, agrees with the critic's reasons for liking or disliking it or doesn't agree; and he decides after a sufficient number of instances which critic has and which has not the perception, insight, and understanding that are what give him authority.

When Virgil Thomson remarks that Mitropoulos has taken over the New York Philharmonic like an army of occupation, or that Stella Roman doesn't sing in phrases but only in single notes which she exploits with a spectacular technique of crooning and crescendo, a reader with ears and intelligence can listen to a Mitropoulos or Roman performance and hear what the statement describes; and he will feel pleasure and gratitude for the brilliantly expressed perception which has increased his own understanding. When Mr. Thomson says Toscanini's tempos are a shade fast the reader can sometimes hear confirmation of that. But when Mr. Thomson works out a demonstration that Toscanini's performances have meter but not rhythm, the same reader will listen to a performance and hear the fact that contradicts the demonstration. Or when Mr. Thomson writes that Toscanini's performance of Beethoven's Seventh was a mere highly dramatized outline taken at too fast a pace for the orchestra to execute detail with clarity, and that in the per-

formance of the *Missa Solemnis* "there was no continuity in dynamic gamut" but instead a constant "unsubtle contrasting of force with weakness," the reader will hear in the one performance the clearly executed detail, in the other the "continuity in dynamic gamut" wherever Beethoven asks for it. And having heard, the reader will decide that there is no profit for him in either the pat schematizations about Toscanini's work as it is in Mr. Thomson's imagination, or the reports of concerts at which Mr. Thomson hears not what happens in Toscanini's performances but what should happen to fit the pat schematizations.*

But not all readers have good ears and strong minds; and there are occasions when these are not enough. For example, Mr. Thomson makes the statement that the Boston Symphony, Philadelphia, and New York Philharmonic orchestras

* [1948] Corroboration of this came some years later, when, in the course of a conversation about conductors, Thomson explained that whereas Toscanini had learned the operatic traditions in the opera house, he had found himself, at the age of fifty, having to deal with the entire symphonic repertory and had solved the problem by doing a complete streamlining job on it. This was the set of facts Thomson had imagined to account for the plastic continuity in Toscanini's performances that he did not like and that he disposed of with the term "streamlining." But the real facts are summed up in a statement of Toscanini after his performance of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony in November, 1944—that when he had first played it fifty years before he had thought it was German music and he must therefore play it the way he had heard the German conductors play it, and that he had spent fifty years daring to play it more and more as he himself felt it should be played, and at last had played it entirely as he felt. Toscanini, that is, began to conduct the symphonic repertory ten years after his start as an opera conductor, but before he was thirty (Schubert's C major was on his first program); and the works he began to conduct he had first learned to know in his youth, as we all do, from the performances he had heard—the German classics from the performances of the celebrated German conductors who visited Italy. If, then, "Toscanini's performances of Beethoven are not in the Viennese tradition," as a German conductor once said to me, it is not for lack of knowledge of that tradition, but because he has rejected it. What he has imposed on the symphonic repertory is his own musical taste; and in this respect there is no such distinction as Thomson made between symphony and opera: he has imposed the same taste on opera, and produced in an act of *La Traviata* or *Die Meistersinger* or *The Magic Flute* the same plastic continuity as in a movement of a Beethoven symphony.

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are as different from one another as the cities that created them and forged them slowly into the image of each city's intellectual ideals. Conductors have been had in to aid this formation, and a few of these have left traces of their own taste on that of the cities they have worked for. But chiefly their function has been to care for a precious musical organism . . . and to allow it to mature according to its own nature and . . . its community's particular temperament. . . . [Of] Boston, the intellectually elegant and urbane, [the orchestra] makes thin sounds, like the Paris orchestras, thin and utterly precise, like golden wire and bright enamel. Nothing ever happens that isn't clear. . . . So perfectly turned out is any of its executions that, whether becoming to the work or not, it has a way of separating itself from it. It neither conceals the work nor presents it; it walks down the street beside it, rather very much as a piece of consummate dressmaking will sometimes do with the lady who thinks she is wearing it . . .

To cope with and evaluate this statement, a reader would have had to hear the completely different sounds, styles, and characters of the 1917 Boston Symphony conducted by Muck, the post-1920 Boston Symphony created and conducted by Monteux, the post-1924 Boston Symphony re-created and conducted by Koussevitzky, or the New York Philharmonic conducted by Toscanini and the same orchestra the next week under another conductor; he would have had to understand from all this a great deal about the functioning and relations of orchestras and conductors; he would, then, have had to know that the 1917 orchestra of Boston did not make thin sounds like golden wire, and that the sounds it did make were dictated by the temperament not of Boston but of Karl Muck. And a reader would need such experience and understanding, in addition to good ears and mind, in the other instances where the general cultural and social background to which Mr. Thomson relates the musical phenomenon under discussion is a magician's hat into which he

can put fact and perception, and out of which he then can pull the oddly, amusingly fantastic products of a mind at play that are suitable for tossing about in cocktail-hour chit-chat, or the serious conclusions—in the articles about the New York Philharmonic a couple of years ago, for example—that have no more relation to realities.

Into a discussion of things of this world as they exist and happen, Mr. Thomson disconcertingly introduces, as though they were equally real, things from some private world as he would like them to exist and happen. Thus, he writes hard-headedly that the Metropolitan management is paralyzed by its fear of its intellectual inferiors instead of being animated by a fear of its intellectual betters; that the opera house is acoustically poor and inefficient and expensive to operate; but that first-class opera has been given there and can be given there again. But then he adds that first-class opera will be demanded by the nation-wide radio public after the war—this radio public demanding the first-rate being one that exists only in the Thomson world, in which there are American composers ready for a New York Philharmonic five-year plan to build an American repertory for an American audience, and other things of the sort. The mixture of real and unreal is disconcerting; but the worse trouble is that it often takes an experienced reader to be disconcerted.

February 12, 1944

The Metropolitan's first *Marriage of Figaro* was one of the most brilliant performances the company has given in recent years. Having considered whether I should listen to the broadcast in the quiet of my home or should accept the poor acoustic conditions and the audience disturbances of the actual performance to which a friend had invited me, I finally decided on the actual performance. My seat, in the second row of the Orchestra Circle on the extreme right very near the orchestra pit and the

stage, was one from which I could barely hear many of the marvelous things that happen in the orchestra (whereas the absent-minded rolling and unrolling of a program directly behind my left ear was only too distinct); but I could hear and see the singers very well; and it was their work that made the performance extraordinary.

It is a long time since I have heard an opera sung so well throughout—even minor roles like Marcellina and Barberina by Irra Petina and Marita Farell; major ones by older singers like Pinza, Brownlee, Novotna, and Baccaloni, who were in particularly good voice; and above all Susanna and the Countess by Bidu Sayao and Eleanor Steber. Sayao sang as beautifully this time as she had done many times before; but Steber's previous achievements had left me unprepared for singing that was the sensation of the afternoon. That is, she had used a fresh, agreeable voice with good musical taste; but she had begun every performance with a strong tremolo which sometimes had cleared up and sometimes had not. This time, however, the very first tones of *Porgi amor* were clear and lovely; and her technical security continued to produce such tones, which her musical taste molded into long, continuous, and exquisite phrases. Moreover, arriving at the reprise of *Dove sono* she paused, lay back in her chair, and sang it pianissimo as though recalling a dream of past happiness—a stroke of dramatic imagination which brings me to the fact that her Countess was also the outstanding impersonation of the afternoon and one of the finest I have ever seen on the operatic stage. Nobody I have seen in the role has conveyed as Steber did the Countess's youth and beauty, her spirit, her wounded pride, her humiliation at having to call on her servants for help and involve herself with them in stratagems against her wayward husband.

The cavorting about of the other characters is easier to do, but it takes actors as good as Pinza, Baccaloni, Sayao, Novotna, and the others to do it as well as they did. At moments in this performance, however, they did too much; and one piece of new

business—Sayao's extravagant posturings in the Countess's cloak and hat, in the finale—Dr. Graf should eliminate. On the other hand there is one point—the *Venite, inginocchiatevi* scene—at which they do too little; and here Dr. Graf should make the sense of the words clear to the audience by having Susanna, who has measured herself against Cherubino, try one of her dresses on him.

The performance was excellently conducted by Bruno Walter.

I have commented, in recent years, on the increasing refinement and subtilization of Lehmann's style in lieder-singing that has accompanied her increasing care, restraint, and skill in the use of an aging but still extraordinarily beautiful voice; at this year's recitals I had the impression that the process had continued, making her art of singing these songs more wonderful than ever. It is in fact unique; and what makes it so is the deep and rich poetic insight and emotion and the power of dramatic characterization and projection that used to tear the phrase apart but now operate through the subtly inflected, phraseologically continuous line of beautiful vocal sound, to produce such great and overwhelming performances as her *Wirtshaus* and *Doppelgänger* of Schubert, or the enchanting comedy of her *Kartenlegerin* of Schumann.

February 26, 1944

Mahler's Fourth Symphony, which I heard for the first time when Bruno Walter conducted it recently with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony, made me freshly aware of certain important qualities of Mahler's music and of the mind that produced it. The work is unusually relaxed, genial, gay, humorous; it is characteristically expansive and long-winded; but characteristic also is the unfailing alertness and attentiveness of mind that keeps the progression freshly interesting. It is only with such alertness and attentiveness that one can use a huge orchestra as Mahler does, choosing now these few instruments, now those

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to produce detail after detail that is as delicate and subtle as it is strikingly original. The same qualities of mind are evident in Mahler's daring harmony and counterpoint; and they make his thought as fascinating as his language and style.

In Mahler's music Walter's tendency to carry relaxation to the point of softness and slackness is not the weakness it is in Beethoven or Mozart; and the performance was superb. In its own way it constituted an additional devastating comment on the conception, the feeling, the style of Rodzinski's performance of Mahler's Second earlier in the season. And the pleasure which the orchestra had in working with a relaxed conductor instead of with a tensely driving one was audible in its playing.

Haydn's Quartet Opus 54 No. 2 in C major, which the Budapest Quartet played at its fourth Y.M.H.A. concert, is one of the works in which the Haydn process that I have talked about produces a new breath-taking surprise with each movement—the unusual form of the slow movement, with lower strings gravely developing a single sustained phrase while the first violin soars above them in poignant quasi-vocal, quasi-improvisatory florid melody; the solemnity of the finale; and perhaps most amazing of all, the dissonances in the trio of the minuet movement, conveying a heart-piercing anguish. The effect of this trio was spoiled by the Budapest group's excessively fast tempo for the movement; aside from this the performance was one which only the Budapest Quartet itself could have surpassed; and the group would in fact have played the work with the same phenomenal beauty of sound, precision of ensemble, and subtlety of phrasing as it did Beethoven's Opus 135 if it had worked as long on the Haydn as it has on the Beethoven. Actually the two works sounded as though they were performed by two different groups; and the roughnesses heard in the Haydn were also heard in Mozart's Quintet K.593 in D. major, which has its own breath-taking movements, particularly in the slow movement.

March 11, 1944

The Metropolitan has not accepted the contention that all its performances should be given in English so that the audiences may understand the words that are sung and know what the operas are about; but it has done so for operatic comedies, or rather for some of them—for Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, Mozart's *Magic Flute*, and now Verdi's *Falstaff*.

It is true that an audience needs to know what an opera is about. But I question whether this is more true of the comedies than of the tragedies, or of the comedies I have just mentioned than of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* or Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. And I doubt that the knowledge is achieved by having the opera sung in English. If the advocates of opera in English were to attend a performance in Berlin or Vienna, where all operas are sung in German, they would see as many people reading librettos as are to be seen in the Metropolitan, and for the same reason—the fact that the words are difficult, and for the most part impossible, to hear and understand: often they have been distended to unintelligibility in the process of being fitted to the music; often they are drowned by the orchestra; and most of the audience are too far from the stage. Having been taken to *Falstaff* by a friend I heard it from an excellent seat in row R of the Parquet; moreover I was listening to a delicately orchestrated work; yet only very few of the words reached my ears, and I would have had no understanding of what was going on if I had had to get it from the words that I could hear. Even when the opera is sung in English, then, one must read the words in advance to know what it is about, precisely as one must for a performance in Italian or German. And if that is so the advance reading should be done for a performance in Italian or German. That is, when the only reason for English turns out to be without force, the force of the reasons against English and for the original language should be deferred to.

For one thing there is the fact—which I was made freshly aware of by the *Falstaff* performance—that when one strains to hear all the words one doesn't hear the music; and the music is the point of the whole business. One doesn't go to the Metropolitan for the play of *Norma* or *Aida* or *Salome* or *Tristan* or even *Falstaff*; one doesn't go for the words that Verdi ordered from his librettist by the pound or the ones that Wagner himself perpetrated. One goes for the music about that play, the music that is hung on those words, the music that has much the same relation to the action and words as Cézanne's still-life has to the apples and pears which he painted. Since action and words are there one wants to know what they are about, and indeed one has to know for the music itself to have its full significance and effect; but the following of the drama should be such as not to distract one's attention from the music—which is to say that it should be a recognition of what one already knows, not a straining to discover what one doesn't know.

Then there is the fact that a performance in English sacrifices the effect of the sound of the original language; and the loss is greatest where the greatest gain is claimed for English—in comedy. Even in the long stretches where words cannot be heard clearly enough to be understood the loss of the mere sound of the Italian syllables is like the loss of an instrumental color in the orchestral part. But the argument for English is concerned with the places where the words come through clearly, and where, it is contended, the audience must understand them so that it may get the humorous points and laugh. But these are salient places which are planned for laughs; and because of the way they are contrived they are places which remain in the mind of anyone who reads the libretto, so that he recognizes and understands Dame Quickly's unctuous *Revere-e-e-enza!* as she curtsies, her repeated exclamation *Po-o-o-vera donna!*, her *Siete un gran seduttore!* as she pokes *Falstaff* in the ribs, and in addition he gets from these Italian statements something that is lost in *Oh most honored sir!* or *Unhappy lady!* or *You're a wicked seducer!* He understands *Falstaff's*

argument with Ford over precedence at the end of the act, and enjoys the additional effect, with the delightful music, of the words *Prima voi . . . Prima voi* and *Passate . . . Prego*.

And finally there is what the decision to use English cost this particular Metropolitan production of *Falstaff* in effectiveness, on top of the losses due to other things. Beecham, giving his own explanation why the work is not more of a box-office attraction, thinks that the six scenes are too many "for the thin shape and light weight of the piece; and the ensemble movements, until the very close when it is too late, have not the time to gather momentum and thrill the ear with that irresistible flood of tone that we have in the great finales of *Aida* and *Otello*"; and he observes that while *Falstaff* has exquisite and haunting fragments of melody it has "no tunes of a broad and impressive character . . . of the type of *Ritorna vincitor* or *Ora per sempre addio* [which] might have saved the situation." But whenever I have heard the work conducted by Toscanini every one of those six scenes has ended in a storm of applause; and the reason has been its mercurial swiftness and lightness and effortlessness even in the difficult double ensembles. Initially these qualities have represented Toscanini's feeling for the pace and character of the work; but after that they have come out of the hours and hours of rehearsal, the sheer hard work that is necessary to produce the appearance of ease. Beecham's performance also had lightness and exquisite contours and textures; but his pace was often a little deliberate; and the normal Metropolitan conditions of insufficient rehearsal resulted in raggedness and strain in some of the ensembles. But in addition the decision to use English-speaking singers in an English production compelled the use of young singers, most of them—Steber, Greer, Browning, Kullman—quite acceptable, but one of them, Margaret Harshaw, without the weight of voice (to say nothing of weight of body) for Dame Quickly. And above all it hung a dead weight on the performance in the *Falstaff* of Tibbett.

March 18, 1944

What the advocates of opera in English want, and what the Metropolitan failed to achieve with its *Falstaff* in English, the Nine O'Clock Opera Company succeeded in achieving with its performance of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, which was presented in New York recently in the Town Hall Endowment Fund series: a play on the stage, of which almost every word could be heard, which was therefore completely intelligible and entertaining even to an audience with no advance knowledge of what it was about, and which the engaging members of the company made highly enjoyable. But the cost of this success was even greater losses than those of the Metropolitan *Falstaff*.

The words could be heard and understood so well because the singers were singing in a small hall and had no orchestra between them and the audience, but only an accompanying piano off-stage; and the loss of all that the orchestra contributes to *Figaro* was the first musical cost. Then the play was cut down and simplified; and with some of the complications and the characters involved in them there was eliminated some of the music—some rather good music like Bartolo's *La vendetta!* and the first-act Susanna-Marcellina duet. But additional music was eliminated even where characters and action were retained; and this included both of the Countess's great arias, *Porgi amor* and *Dove sono*. And of the music that was retained, what was not slow-moving and large-spanned melody like *Voi che sapete* and *Deh vieni, non tardar* was hurried over in a way that made it ineffective, unclear, difficult for the mind to get hold of—even if this mind were not too concentrated on the quick succession of words to give any attention to the music.

In addition to these musical losses there was one which I pointed out last week. The audience listening to *Non più andrai* sung in English could hear and understand Figaro's ironic statements to Cherubino. But if his audience had read the English translation in advance and were listening to the aria sung in Italian it would have had not only the same knowledge of what

Figaro was saying but the additional enjoyment of the delicious effect, with Mozart's music, of the Italian words and rhymes of *Per montagne, per valloni, Con le nevi e i sollioni, Al concerto di tromboni, Di bombarde, di cannoni, Che le palle in tutti i tuoni*. And this is, of course, only one example of what was true throughout the performance.

At New York's new City Center of Music and Drama I attended the first performance of Bizet's *Carmen*. I cannot recall ever having heard the title role sung as beautifully as it was sung by Jennie Tourel—with such loveliness of vocal sound and such musical phrasing. But I also cannot recall anyone whose physical appearance did more damage to her credibility in the role, and who had less sense for the stage with which to overcome that initial handicap. For lack of this sense, which would have built up and projected a continuous line of pose and movement and through this an impression of dramatic character, her impersonation was a collection of discontinuous mannerisms—the traditional *Carmen* mannerisms, and additional prima donna mannerisms, which were made even more absurd by the absence of the alluring appearance and personality that they presumed.

There was the same contrast between musical excellence and dramatic absurdity in the entire performance. The orchestra was poor; but most of the leading singers—Mario Berini (Jose), Mary Martha Briney (Micaela), Regina Resnik (Frasquita), Rosalind Nadell (Mercedes), but not George Czaplicki (Escamillo)—sang well, except for a few constricted high tones from Berini and Briney; the chorus sang superbly; and Laszlo Halasz conducted very well. On the other hand not even the dignified entrance processions of pot-bellied noblemen and dumpy noble ladies in the Metropolitan's *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* are as funny as what the chorus of women in that *Carmen* performance looked like and did; and even more explosive were the appearance and antics of Resnik and Nadell. Hans Wolmut, the stage director, could not help what these people—and some others—looked like; but he could have controlled what they did. He seems to have set out to think things

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out freshly—but only half the time; as a result there were some new details of staging that made dramatic sense, along with some of the traditional ones that make no sense at all. The factory girls, for example, came out of the factory in the first act, as they should; but Carmen preserved her right to a prima donna entrance from somewhere in Seville. Or some of the men were provided with a dramatic purpose for being on the stage by being made to pass bales of merchandise from the factory for loading; but one man was allowed to sit at the back of the stage during the Micaela-José duet and distract attention by little movements of personal boredom, physical discomfort, and so on. Moreover the identical bales turned up in the third act—most of them borne on bent-over backs, but one of them carried by the string as though it were a birdcage just bought at Macy's.

April 8, 1944

The late Frederick Stock was a conductor with the ability to get the Chicago Symphony to play as beautifully as you can hear it play in the recent Victor recordings of its performances. As a musician he achieved good results with comparatively modern works; but his recorded performances of older music—Mozart's G minor Symphony, Schubert's C major—showed him to be without the feeling for plastic and rhythmic continuity, proportion, and coherence, and for subtle rhythmic elasticity, that this music requires, and that would have prevented the awkward discontinuities in pace, the rigidities alternating with tasteless rubatos. In the Victor set of the performance of his orchestral version of Bach's great Prelude and Fugue in E flat for organ, then, you can hear the beautiful sound of the Chicago Symphony, recorded with superb richness and spaciousness, though with some lack of clarity because of the reverberant hall; you can hear the Prelude suddenly begin to gallop at measure 71 when the beats are broken up into rapid figuration, and slow down awkwardly when this figuration ends; you can hear the

awkward changes of pace for the second and third sections of the triple fugue; and so on.

The set also presents an example of Stock's work as an editor and transcriber of music. The first example that I encountered, many years ago, was his revision of Schumann's Third Symphony. Composers miscalculate in orchestrating; and even the most scrupulous conductor must correct such miscalculations. A great deal has been said about Schumann's inept use of the orchestra—his dulling of what should have been brilliant sonorities, his obscuring of important themes, by poor combinations and faulty balances of instruments. And Stock quoted Theodore Thomas's comment after a performance of the Third Symphony—"Such fine, noble themes, good workmanship, and yet such abominably poor orchestration"—as the impetus for his revision of the work. But actually Stock changed not only the orchestration but the themes and workmanship, adding new counterpoint which, he said, "[grew] out of the material which Schumann originated," inserting "a measure here and there in order to give greater clarity to Schumann's thought," writing a new coda, bringing the chief theme of the first movement in for the conclusion of the last movement, altering rhythms, displacing accents, and in sum doing the sort of thing Rimsky-Korsakov did with Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. And the result proved Schumann, like Musorgsky, to have been the better composer of his own music.

Bach certainly requires no help from Stock with the themes and workmanship of his Prelude and Fugue; but he gets it nevertheless in Stock's transcription of the work for orchestra. In the very first measure of the Prelude there is the first of the many alterations that Stock makes in Bach's rhythms; later Stock tacks on little introductions to the theme that is first stated in measure 32, adds lines of counterpoint, fills out thin contrapuntal textures with chords—all this to make Bach's work conform to his own taste. And you can get an idea of what that taste is from one detail of Stock's scoring: the theme stated in measure 32 of the Prelude is punctuated in the original by a

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single short pedal-note; and the orchestral equivalent would be a single bowed or plucked note of the string basses; but what Stock puts there is a broken chord of the harp—from which you also can get an idea of what the rest of the scoring is like.

Recently a Chicago reader gave me a description of the orchestration of Schubert's great C major Quintet that Stock completed just before his death. "Not only did he pass the main themes of the movements around among different sections of the orchestra, now violins, now cellos, now woodwinds, now even brasses, until they were enfeebled, dissipated, and deprived of all distinguishing voice . . . but when the finale was eventually reached, it exploded into bursts of percussion, tympani, brasses, bells, and general racket similar to the endings Stock gave to his Bach transcriptions . . ."

The original scores of Schumann's symphony, Bach's fugue, and Schubert's quintet are still available to performers and public; but just as Rimsky-Korsakov contrived to make his revision of Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* the only version that we are able to hear to this very day, so the only published score of Griffes's *Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Khan* is one issued in 1929 that incorporates changes in the orchestration made by Stock. Like Rimsky, Stock prefaces his revision with explanatory statements that turn out to be as questionable as Rimsky's. He performed *Kubla Khan* in January 1920, he says; and meeting Griffes the following autumn at the Pittsfield Chamber Music Festival, he suggested that the orchestration could be improved. "This he readily admitted, and we arranged to meet again in order to go over the score together. The results of this very careful scrutiny are faithfully embodied in this revised version." But Edward M. Maisel, in his biography of Griffes,³⁵ points out that Griffes was dead in the autumn of 1920, so that the conference must have occurred in the autumn of 1919, and whatever suggestions Griffes accepted from Stock must have been incorporated in the revisions which Maisel tells us Griffes continued to make in the score until he delivered it to Monteux for the rehearsals of the first performance in Boston on No-

vember 28, 1919. And at that point the work was in a form that satisfied him completely: "He told me," a colleague reported, "that during the rehearsals he had never had to change one note."

I think Maisel might have questioned whether the conference took place even in 1919. For it was not until after the Boston performances, not until a letter written late in December, 1919, that Griffes for the first time mentioned Stock in connection with *Kubla Khan*: "At present Stock has the score and parts, and I believe he intends to produce it sometime this month." And Stock's own statement is further evidence that this was when he first saw the score and found things in it that he thought could be improved. In that case he couldn't have discussed them with Griffes, who was already ill; and he would not only have made unauthorized changes in the work when he performed it himself, but would have been guilty of incorporating these unauthorized changes in the published score.

But it is even worse if the conference did take place in the autumn of 1919. For in that case the score that Stock received for his performance in January, 1920, was one that incorporated the suggestions of his that Griffes had accepted—one, moreover, in which Griffes and Monteux had found it unnecessary to change one note; and Stock's action was as monstrous as that of Rimsky-Korsakov, who made after Musorgsky's death the changes in *Boris* that Musorgsky had rejected when alive.

May 20, 1944

Of a number of recent concerts and broadcasts the first that comes to mind is Leonard Bernstein's concert with the New York Philharmonic. It is natural to begin by looking at a conductor as he conducts; but I find that Bernstein's movements are something I don't like to look at. However, a conductor has a right to do what he wants to achieve his results; and a critic's proper concern is solely with those results. One of Bernstein's mannerisms—his exaggerated, sharp upbeat—might lead

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one to expect tense and nervous performances; actually the performances of Mozart's *Figaro* Overture and Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony at that Philharmonic concert were all suavity and grace and unstraining brilliance. But then came a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* which was full of violently and hectically discontinuous shifts from slow tempos that were excessively slow to fast ones that were excessively fast, and the other way around. As for Bernstein's symphony *Jeremiah*, which he conducted at the concert, it gave me the impression of a facility in pouring forth sounds that proceed from nothing more than this facility.

One of the memories I treasure is of a marvelously light and winged and radiant performance of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto by Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic, with Remo Bolognini playing the solo part with delicacy and purity of style. Toscanini's recent performance of the work at his final General Motors broadcast had the great Heifetz playing with pretentiously mannered and sentimentally distorted phrasing; and someone I know who plays the violin exclaimed: "He exaggerated his staccatos to the point where they didn't have any musical sound!" People have found it difficult to understand how Toscanini could play some of the music he has played; I have found it more difficult to understand how a man who is himself a performing artist with a passion for plastic perfection in phrasing, and who would explode in anger if a solo wind-player in his orchestra were to commit the slightest of the phraseological vulgarities committed by Heifetz—how such a man has come to have Heifetz with all his vulgarities as soloist in performances of concertos.

Webster Aitken's feeling for the piano and for music were evident in the beautiful sound and superbly contoured phrasing of his playing in a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto K.271 broadcast from WQXR. The conductor was Leon Barzin, who, whenever I have occasion to watch him work and hear

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the result, always impresses me with his complete technical competence and his first-rate musicianship. And that is interesting in connection with something else. When you try to find out why an Ormandy was engaged for the Philadelphia Orchestra (and why the only other man considered was Iturbi), why a Barbirolli was engaged for the New York Philharmonic, why a Rodzinski was engaged to succeed him, and why in each case a Beecham was passed over, the answers invariably include the statement "And the directors wanted a young man who could grow with the orchestra as Stokowski did in Philadelphia." This is the consequence of having orchestras run by men with smart financial and legal minds but with an understanding of orchestral affairs which caused them to reason that since a young conductor named Stokowski produced the Philadelphia Orchestra, what they had to get was a young conductor—men who, in other words, did not understand that Stokowski produced the Philadelphia Orchestra not with his youth but with his competence, and that what they had to get was not a young conductor but a competent one. Not only that; but having decided to have only a young conductor these men engaged an Ormandy, a Barbirolli, a Rodzinski, but in each case passed over one young conductor—Barzin—with the technical competence and musicianship for the job.

June 3, 1944

Koussevitzky—when there is an occasion for him to talk about music—has a way of hurling big words and ideas around, with much destruction of intellectual crockery. One such occasion was a recent *Life* article⁷ on American composers. Explaining what he meant by American music he observed that "musical art is an expression of life and nature . . . its manifestation in each country is in accordance not only with that country's spiritual riches but also with its natural riches—its mountains, its rivers, its fertile land"—in our case the Mississippi, for example. It was not surprising therefore to learn that while "there is prob-

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ably not a single living musician who understands Einstein's fourth dimension, yet the discovery that a fourth dimension could exist has powerfully stimulated musical artists' imaginations, broadened their artistic horizons, and deepened their inspiration"—indeed that it has made a difference in Koussevitzky's own performances. And "the composer of today reveals in us different emotions than the composer of yesterday. . . . We don't always understand exactly what are our own emotions. . . . Beethoven had difficulties with some people who did not understand that he was expressing their emotions." That is something Beethoven himself did not understand, I suspect.

I suspect also that the facts of some of the incidents Koussevitzky described in his account of his patronage of American composers would not recognize themselves in the stories as he now recalls and tells them. He has, he says, had to battle for the American composer with the public and the critics; and when he has considered a work worth playing and they have not, he of course has been right and has continued to play it until they were convinced. His example is Copland's *Music for the Theater*, which he says was a complete failure at its first New York performance, and which he therefore repeated a month later, with the result that each critic now liked a different part, and which "today . . . is in the standard repertoire of every major orchestra in the United States." But I heard that first performance (at a concert of the League of Composers or some other such group); and my recollection is that the audience responded to the piece as warmly as it deserved, as did the Carnegie Hall audience a month later. On the other hand I heard people in the audience express their dislike of the *Ode* which Copland wrote for the Boston Symphony several years later; and they were right, and would not, I am sure, have changed their opinion if Koussevitzky had repeated the work—just as the people who have disliked the works of Harris and Schuman have been right and have, I am sure, continued to dislike them in the face of Koussevitzky's persistence.

In 1924, he says, when he began his work with the Boston

Symphony, "American creative music was barely alive"; and he revived it by playing the works of American composers and in this way getting them to write. American music was barely alive when Monteux played a new work of Griffes; it began to revive when Koussevitzky played a new work of Edward Burlingame Hill. The truth is that other conductors have offered American composers the same kind of encouragement, and that if Koussevitzky hadn't played the music of Copland, Harris, and Schuman it would not have gone unperformed and uncomposed. And it is amusing to watch him, in some of his stories, by-pass what others did.

Thus he tells that during his first months in America he met Gershwin. "He had already composed the *Rhapsody in Blue*, I went to the première given by Paul Whiteman. . . . Although then he lacked great technical knowledge, Gershwin . . . brought a new idea in the expression of music. He showed the whole gaiety and gusto of American life. I confess that I did not then think the *Rhapsody in Blue* suitable for concert performance by a great symphony orchestra. I was wrong. Later I became aware of this and asked Gershwin to compose a piece for the Boston Symphony. He wrote the *Second Rhapsody*. . . . The rhapsodies . . . were proof that there would be a real American music." One would suppose from this that after *Rhapsody in Blue* Gershwin's next step as an American composer, taken at the instigation of Koussevitzky, was *Second Rhapsody*; one would never suspect that there were intervening steps instigated by someone else.

As a matter of fact Koussevitzky, who took over the Boston Symphony in the fall of 1924, could not have heard the première of *Rhapsody in Blue*, which occurred in February of that year. The conductor who did attend that first Whiteman concert in Aeolian Hall was Damrosch, who after each number managed to get his "bravo!" out ahead of the applause, and who for the same reason jumped into the driver's seat of the Gershwin-for-American-Composer bandwagon by commissioning Gershwin to write the Piano Concerto in F. This was performed

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in the season of 1925-26; and Damrosch also conducted the first performance of *An American in Paris* in the season of 1928-29. And it was not until a couple of years later that Koussevitzky performed *Second Rhapsody*, which—if I remember correctly—had begun as part of a Gershwin score of a film, when it had had the title *Rhapsody in Rivets*, because of its imitations of riveting with which it “expressed” American life.

Koussevitzky evidently shares this idea that was behind Gershwin’s career as a serious American composer—that since American life includes jazz and riveting the music which “expresses” this life also had to include them, and that a man who writes superb Broadway show music is therefore the man to write the American symphony and opera. The idea is completely fallacious; and that is what Gershwin’s works as a serious American composer proved.

June 24, 1944

The attitude of the New Friends of Music seems to be that if I point out the discrepancies between its pretensions and its performances it doesn’t want me at its concerts. That held for the three Schnabel recitals of Beethoven’s music which the New Friends sponsored after the end of its chamber music series; and so I didn’t hear the first recital, at which, I was reliably informed, Schnabel’s playing betrayed the fact that he was very ill and should not have played at all, or the second, at which he was in his best form. But through someone’s kindness I did hear the third.

I arrived at Carnegie Hall too late for the first work, one of the Sonatas Opus 2, but in time for Opus 81a (*Les Adieux*). As I listened with anticipation based on recollection I was struck, literally, by the unpleasantness of the sounds that came out of the piano. True, I was sitting on the right-center aisle, and on that side a piano is likely to sound hard and clangy in Carnegie Hall. But I had sat there before for Schnabel’s performances; and though in the past there had been moments when fortis-

simos had been pushed beyond the capacity of the instrument, I had never before heard such consistent insensitive attack of the piano, and such consistent harsh, jangling sounds as this treatment of the instrument produced.

But at least the performance was one in which the outlines of the work were perceptible. Not so the performance of the *Diabelli* Variations that followed. I had heard Schnabel play them at least twice in Carnegie Hall; and his H.M.V. recording had made me intimately familiar with both the formidable work and his wonderfully clarifying performance. But this time variation after variation was hurled out as jumble after jumble of jangling sounds in which I was unable to discover any outline, any rhythm—which is to say, any musical sense.

Schnabel's playing always has been uneven: one moment the music has been marvelously inflected, integrated, shaped, and clarified; the next moment—it might be the next work, or even the next movement of the same work—it has been distorted, torn, confused. One moment, I would say, his musicality has been allowed to operate by mental and emotional equilibrium; the next moment it has been swamped by excessive emotional intensity or pompousness, with the result that he has taken a finale too fast for clarity, or has loaded the phrases of a slow movement with more significance than they could carry. When calm, moreover, he has produced ravishingly beautiful sounds from the piano; when excited he has driven fortissimos beyond the limits of agreeable sound. And in the playing I heard recently the bad tendencies were merely worse.

After the second recital Virgil Thomson wrote a general statement of what he thought was wrong with Schnabel's playing of Beethoven. It was the fact that Schnabel played as a late-nineteenth-century romantic the music of "a child of the late eighteenth." Specifically, "Mr. Schnabel plays as if he did not admit any difference between the expressive functions of melody and of passage work. The neutral material of music—scales, arpeggiated basses, accompanying figures, ostinato chordal backgrounds, formal cadences—he plays as if they were an intense

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communication, as if they were saying something as important as the main thematic material," when they serve rather "as amplification, as underpinning, frequently as mere acoustical brilliance." This robs "the melodic material, the expressive phrases, of their singing power," and makes "Beethoven sound sometimes a little meretricious as a composer. His large-scale forms include, of necessity, a large amount of material that has a structural rather than a directly expressive function. Emphasizing all this as if it were phrase by phrase of the deepest emotional portent . . . blows up the commonplaces of musical rhetoric into a form of bombast that"—and here note the two results—"makes Beethoven's early sonatas, which have many formal observances in them, sound empty of meaning, and the later ones, which sometimes skip formal transitions, sound like the improvisations of a talented youth."

The criticism would have force if only the music and the playing were what Thomson describes. He makes Beethoven a child of the late eighteenth century so that the scales and arpeggiated basses and so on may have the purely structural function in his music that they have in Mozart's; but actually I can find even in the earliest of Beethoven's sonatas very little of this material that Beethoven does not give some expressive function. And listening to Schnabel's recordings of them I find that he plays this material with no more than the expressivity that is implicit in it—not "as if it were phrase by phrase of the deepest emotional import."

Thomson evidently does not like Schnabel's playing; and I would suspect that a man who likes the French pianists' way of rattling off Mozart would not like the sharp contours and powerful tensions of Schnabel's way. I can only surmise; since Thomson himself has yet to state what he does not like in Schnabel's playing as it exists. What he has done has been to say what he does not like in Schnabel's playing of Beethoven's music as he imagines both. And in this speculation divorced from reality there is, in the end, not even logical coherence, but only arbitrary verbalization. Writing about Schnabel's playing of all Beethoven

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he must make his analysis apply to the performances of the late sonatas; and he does. But logically the tendency to blow up the purely formal material that he says exists in the early sonatas cannot produce any bad result in the late sonatas which, as he says, omit formal transitions; and what he says is the result of that tendency in those late sonatas has no relation to it that I can see, but is merely tacked on to it by arbitrary assertion—this in addition to its having no relation to fact, to the actual performances, which do not make the works “sound like the improvisations of a talented youth.”

And further evidence of the remoteness and arbitrariness of this train of thought comes when Thomson gets down to writing about the actual performances of that second recital and tells us how good the performance of Opus 111 was. True, his way of putting it is that it “suffered least from the disproportionate emphasizing of secondary material.” But then it appears that Schnabel “achieved a more convincing relation in the first movement than one currently hears between the declamatory and the lyrical subjects,” and that “in the finale he produced for us that beatific tranquility that was a characteristic part of Beethoven’s mature expression and that had been noticeably wanting, though there were plenty of occasions for it, in the earlier part of the evening.” That is one way of dealing with one of the greatest interpretative achievements of our time.

July 8, 1944

In a recent article on modernism Virgil Thomson observed that “the leading masters of it, Arnold Schönberg and Igor Stravinsky, are now elderly gentlemen. Their precepts and practices are expounded at all the music schools and colleges; their followers constitute practically the whole pedagogical wing of contemporary composition. All this represents a consolidation of past gains for the modernist movement.” And “since modern music itself has come to be a conservative and well-entrenched institution, the opposition to it no longer represents an intellec-

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tual position of any strength at all"; which is like saying that since Alcoa has come to be a conservative and well-entrenched institution the opposition to it no longer represents an intellectual position of any strength at all—the "intellectual" being an example of Thomson's use of language for much the same purpose, and with much the same result, as Father Divine's.

"The estimate of how much modernism, and in what degree of dilution, a given audience will take at a given time," he continued, "is purely a consideration of practicability. Few real disputes about aesthetics have been active since the modernists came into command of all the positions of intellectual eminence by winning, a full generation ago, all the chief arguments about aesthetics. That is why open compromises on practical policy are possible today without any loss of dignity to anybody. Etc., etc." What victories and so on those portentous-sounding words and phrases refer to I don't know; but the general music-loving public doesn't even care: it dislikes the music, and therefore objects to hearing it; being as strongly entrenched in the concert hall as the modernists are in the music schools and colleges it can make its objection effective; and no amount of verbal abracadabra about its having lost the aesthetic battle and about compromises without loss of dignity will fool it into doing anything else.

Not that the general public hasn't read about modern music. Others have had my experience: when, as a member of the general public, I began to listen to the music twenty-five years ago with ears and mind that were open and receptive, I also began to read explanations and discussions of it, in the hope that they would enable me to perceive the new artistic beauty or potency in what impressed me as hideous or feeble; but nothing I learned from reading about it changed the impression I got from listening to it. And in time what I heard made me increasingly impatient with what I read. The music was bad; but the talk about it was worse; and not just the talk of Paul Rosenfeld and the writers in *Modern Music*, but especially the talk of the composers themselves about their works that was

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printed in the program notes. Others, I say, have had my experience, and have reached my conclusions. A reader who wrote me he had no respect for Stravinsky as an artist said this was the result not only of Stravinsky's succession of styles but of his succession of pronouncements about them.

Recently this correspondent sent me the Boston Symphony program notes for the concert that Stravinsky conducted of his own works, including the essay on the Symphony in C major (1940), which was reprinted from the *Musical Quarterly*. In it a Mr. Sol Babitz gave the results of his study of the score and his conferences with Stravinsky; and my correspondent was infuriated by "this sort of thing, which one is always finding in Stravinsky criticism:

The death rattle of the sonata form having been audible for some years, and official obituaries printed, it is rather awkward at this time to have to acknowledge the existence of a master of that form.

You know what I mean: The sonata form is dying, but lo! here is Stravinsky to make it live. The ballet is on its last legs, but Stravinsky arises and it is recreated anew. The art of making pasticcios is dead, but Stravinsky raises it to its former glory. You get more of this arrogance in the following section on the orchestration:

Yet the page as a whole reveals a visual difference portentous of the new sounds contained. The manuscript is quite white, perhaps whiter than any of Stravinsky's scores; an unforgivable sin in the eyes of the pedants who have been held spellbound by the increasing blackness of symphonic scores during the last one hundred years. There is none of the conventional doubling, no outward attempts at tonal balance. Etc.

Completely ignoring the last hundred years of French orchestration, which has done just what Stravinsky has been turning to. Forgetting the best of Honegger's scores; forgetting Ravel. And to speak of no outward attempts at tonal balance is to speak

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nonsense: as great an orchestrator as Stravinsky would never make such a mistake."

It isn't only the arrogance, it is also the verbal churning up of nothing into something that I find infuriating. And that is not found only in the writing about Stravinsky.

July 15, 1944

One of the college-age readers of this column who amaze me constantly with revelations of how much better musical understanding and taste—to say nothing of better all-around perception and sense—they have than I and my contemporaries had at the same age remarked recently in a letter: "The end of *The Marriage of Figaro* has been running through my head. Just to think this music—without even whistling it—sends chills down my back. Whatever happens to me, I can reflect that my life hasn't been wholly lost: I have had the opportunity to know that opera, and that part of it in particular."

I have had thoughts of that kind myself in the last two or three years. In my case it is not merely that I have heard or seen certain things, but that I have lived long enough to perceive in them what I am able to perceive now. I have had this thought about pieces of music, about Toscanini's performances, about Markova's dancing. And one of the pieces of music, certainly, has been *The Marriage of Figaro*. I got to know it well only when the Glyndebourne Festival recording was issued here, and found it marvelous then; but each time that I listened to it again after an interval I heard new marvels for the first time, while the old ones struck me with enlarged or fresh significance and greater impact; and I can reflect that whatever else has happened to me, I have had the luck to achieve the heightened awareness that enabled me most recently to hear in *Figaro* one of the supreme wonders that have been produced on this earth by human powers.

As with the whole so with the part—the passage that my correspondent wrote about. Its effect, like that of any such passage,

comes partly from its context—where it is placed, what it follows. Three hours have been filled with the poignant sorrow of the Countess's *Porgi amor* and *Dove sono*; the longing of Susanna's *Deh vieni, non tardar*; the amused tenderness of her *Venite, inginocchiatevi*; the confused adolescent emotions of Cherubino's *Non so più cosa son*; the ironic menace of Figaro's *Se vuol ballare*; the mock heroics of his *Non più andrai*; the pompousness and malice of Bartolo's *La vendetta*; the ear-ravishing loveliness of the *Letter Duet*; the humor and wit of the duets of Susanna and Figaro, Susanna and Marcellina, Susanna and the Count; the comedy of the first-act trio, the great finale of Act 2, the finale of Act 4. Three hours have been filled with the orchestra's running fire of gay, mocking, witty comment that has created the atmosphere of comedy in which even the serious things have happened. And this has continued to the very last: the music has exaggerated comically the pleas for forgiveness, the Count's stern refusals; and even in the hush of amazement and wonder produced by the Countess's entrance the violins have softly chattered their amusement. But then at last there has been an end to all this, and a moment's silence; and it is at this point, as the Count begins his *Contessa, perdono*, that we hear music which tells us of the sublimity of human forgiveness—music which, after what has come before, is overwhelming. And it becomes even more overwhelming—when it is taken up softly by the chorus, and when it is carried up to a point of superearthy religious exaltation. Then, in the silence which follows, solemn octaves of the strings gently ease us down to this earth again—and to the bustle and fanfares of the final curtain of the operatic comedy. The passage lasts only a couple of minutes; but those two or three minutes, coming after the three hours, create the most wonderful, most impressive moment that I can recall in opera.

It is almost as though Mozart had decided to correct the notion we might have of him as being capable only of what he had given us in the first three hours of *Figaro*—or for that matter what he had given in the slow movement of the Piano

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Concerto K.467 and in other astounding pages of other great works—and had taken a couple of minutes to make us realize that he could, when he chose, reveal spiritual insights equal to the greatest we have known. That was as much time as he needed for the demonstration; and once it had been made it didn't matter whether he made it again. Those insights were there, in addition to everything else that he communicated through the medium which he used as no one else has ever done; and that use of the medium and what he expressed through it made him the most extraordinary musical artist that ever lived.

July 22, 1944

More than once I have said that what has been written about the "modern music" which the public has disliked has been even worse and more objectionable than the music itself. My point has been that the ad hoc aesthetic formulations, the mis-statements and misinterpretation of history, and all the other confusions have been dust in the eyes of people whose ears would not have been fooled. That is, listening to the music these people have known what it meant and what it was worth; but reading about it they have doubted the testimony of their ears and wondered whether there was not something they must learn to hear and understand. I say this as one of those people; and it is the long experience that eventually gave me confidence in my ears and in my impressions of the music that also gave me my present strong objection to the writing about it.

The kind of writing I mean is Paul Rosenfeld's statement—in contradiction to what one heard—that a Rhapsody for orchestra by Wallingford Riegger was "evidently . . . magnificent in texture and consistent in idea, grateful to the ear and lucid in form." And, worse still, his subsequent statement about anyone who was prevented from hearing all this by the work's atonalism: "If indeed one is unable to hear the relation of note to note, freshly, and without past experience, in every composi-

tion, whether it be tonal, bitonal, or without any tonality whatsoever, what indeed can one be said actually to be hearing?" As though it were possible to approach anything—and above all a medium of communication—without one's past experience; as though any and every succession of sounds must convey a coherent, significant relation; and as though one's inability to perceive such a relation between any two sounds must set poor, perplexed Mr. Rosenfeld to wondering what indeed one could be said actually to be hearing.

Then there is Aaron Copland's equally wide-eyed, incredible-as-it-may-seem, how-can-such-things-be talk about the "fantastic notions" with which "newspaper writers and radio commentators who ought to know better" have, apparently for the sheer hell of it, misrepresented modern music and prejudiced the public against it—with which Copland tries to persuade us that we haven't ourselves heard the aridities, uglinesses, and horrors of Hindemith, Bartók, Berg, Schönberg, Stravinsky, and the rest. And his statement of correct notions about the music—with which he tries to get us to hear in those aridities, uglinesses, and horrors an "enriched musical language" and a "new spirit of objectivity, attuned to our own times," that make the music "our music," as natural and acceptable to our ears, as interesting, significant, and valuable to our minds, as people a hundred and two hundred years ago found *their* music.

From this it is only a step to Virgil Thomson trying with mirrors to get us to believe that the music of 150 years ago, which we are deeply affected by, is as incomprehensible to us as the painting and literature of the past, since it was produced by men "whose modes of thought and attitudes of passion were . . . different from ours," and that we can understand only contemporary music, which we dislike, since it is the product of the thought and feeling of our time.

Then there is what the composers say about their own works. Krenek informs us that talking with piano teachers he had discovered the lack of music using advanced contemporary styles and techniques which they might give their students to play,

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and that he had therefore composed *Twelve Short Piano Pieces Written in Twelve-Tone Technique*, whose "musical contents [and] performing difficulty are meant to correspond with the capacity and the interest of normally advanced students and amateurs"—which blandly throws a cloud of dust over the real nature of the twelve-tone technique, the real musical contents of pieces written in that technique, and of these pieces in particular, and the real interest in them of "normally advanced" students and amateurs.

Or Hindemith tells us first that in his *Schwanendreher*, a viola concerto on old German folk melodies, he set out to function like the medieval minstrel who expanded and embellished the melodies he played, "preluding and improvising according to his fancy and ability"—which presumably should justify to our ears, as it does to Hindemith's, the music he produces when he expands and embellishes, preludes and improvises according to *his* fancy and ability. Later he tells us his aim was "to try how the old German folk songs could be adapted for today's concert work, e.g., with a modern arrangement and even in the spirit of the originals"—which again, presumably, should justify the astringency of idiom and aridity of feeling that twist the simple old folk songs into something as distorted and ugly as his own music.

From Hindemith we also get the general pronouncement that "what is generally regretted today is the loose relation maintained by music between the producer and the consumer. The composer these days should never write unless he is acquainted with the demand for his work. The times for consistent composing for one's own satisfaction are probably gone forever, etc." The business-like talk about producer and consumer and demand is intended to get us to accept the idea of composition as a purely commercial activity of setting down black marks on paper, and to accept also the music which results from this activity, when the black marks are translated into sounds which reveal not the slightest trace of the poetic impulse that alone can justify the setting down of black marks on paper.

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And Stravinsky, who tells us that Beethoven's greatness lies not in his ideas but in his musical material, tells us also that he himself, in composing, does not express ideas but only establishes order and discipline in purely sonorous schemes. As though "ideas"—which is to say personal emotions, attitudes, insights—could be kept out of music—even the music of a man determined to produce nothing but ordered and disciplined sonorous schemes. And as though we would, even if we could, shut out of our minds the great "ideas" embodied in Beethoven's musical forms, or ignore the poverty of spirit communicated in Stravinsky's sonorous schemes.

July 29, 1944

The book to read on modern music is Constant Lambert's *Music Ho!*²⁸ It is the only one in which we will find any relation to our experience—in which, that is, the music that is discussed will be recognizable as the music we have heard. And after Rosenfeld, Copland, and the others, Lambert's book will come as an enormous relief—the relief of knowing, after we had been all but persuaded otherwise, that two and two do make four, the sun does rise in the east, and modern music is as sterile and warped and stunted and horrid as it seems. Lambert describes the impasse at which music arrived, the ways in which composers attempted to escape it, the reasons why they failed; and while his entire train of thought cannot be recapitulated here I should like to give some of his individual observations.

We must bear in mind, he says, that the revolutionary music of our century was written before the last war, and that after the war there was a turning back not just to simplicity but to simplicities of the past, and to simplicities in different styles which were mingled in pastiche. "In music . . . melody, rhythm, harmony, and counterpoint . . . can be so dissected from each other, that a composer with no sense of style and no

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creative urge can take medieval works, set them in the style of Bellini, add twentieth-century harmony, develop them in the sequential and formal manner of the eighteenth century, and finally score the whole thing for jazz band." And, just as the post-war room had Negro masks on Adam mantelpieces, and Victorian wool-pictures hanging next to Cubists; and just as Diaghilev's post-war ballets showed the same "amusing" scrambling of periods and styles in decor, music, and choreography; so Stravinsky, who before the war had written the score of *Sacre du printemps*, after the war not only wrote music "like Bach" and "like Handel" but gave Diaghilev a score for *Pulcinella* that introduced jazz glissandos into the music of Pergolesi.

Stravinsky's series of reactions from one style to another Lambert attributes to his lack of any gift for melody; and he points to Tchaikovsky as illustration of his contention that for a great melodist there is no possibility of complete and arbitrary change of style, and indeed no problem of style at all, since his "melody is a living thing, a part of himself," and "carries with it the implications of its harmonic, rhythmic, and contrapuntal treatment." For his neo-classical music Stravinsky attempts to create melody synthetically—which cannot be done. He uses the sequences and cadences of classical melodies which "are the façade, not the whole building. . . . The turns of phrase that occur at the end of a melody with much the same conventional beauty and constructional logic as a Corinthian capitol occurring at the top of a column are taken by Stravinsky, isolated from their surroundings, and plastered over the façade with a complete disregard of their true function." Then there are the figures which, in an eighteenth-century *Allegro*, are merely the harmonies broken up and spaced out into texture: "to use them as Stravinsky does (in his Piano Concerto) as melodic material over a totally different harmonic base is a complete misunderstanding of their value and function." And "to the melodic formulas drawn from Bach . . . are added, in later works, frag-

ments from Beethoven, Bellini, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, and even Johann Strauss—who enters with ludicrous effect into Jocasta's air at the beginning of the second act of *Oedipus Rex*—while to synthetic calm succeeds synthetic drama, and to synthetic austerity synthetic charm."

Stravinsky, with his absorption in purely sonorous schemes, is one of the people Lambert must have in mind who, he says, consider the greatest music "an abstract succession of tastefully arranged notes" and find such abstraction in the classicism of Mozart and other eighteenth-century music. The examples of it that Mozart provides, says Lambert, are not "romantic and subjective masterpieces like [the] G minor Quintet and G minor Symphony," but "the many divertimenti that he cynically turned out in order to pay for the rent and a little champagne. . . . The only classical music that is abstract is bad classical music."

He deals as effectively with Hindemith, who, as the advocate of *Gebrauchsmusik* or utility music written not for the composer's satisfaction but for the consumer's demand, sets up, in opposition to art for art's sake, the doctrine of craft for craft's sake. A man without what it takes to write literature can write advertising copy; there can, then, be utility writing. But "music is only useful if it is good music, whether light or serious"—if, that is, "it provides one with some vital experience." Furthermore, "Hindemith appears to imagine that by ceasing to write for his own satisfaction he is necessarily writing for the satisfaction of others"; but "if a composer is not interested in his own music he can hardly expect others to be." And "by resolutely turning his back on 'art' Hindemith has lessened our interest even in his craft." For we are interested in counterpoint when it is expressive, not when it is purely arbitrary; nor are we interested in form that is an equally arbitrary formalism. "A musical idea of any vitality determines . . . its own formal treatment. . . . But a composer like Hindemith appears, on his own admission, to have nothing personal to say. . . . His musical ideas are consequently lacking in generative power"; but

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"to give them an air of logic he casts them into some pre-established and externally imposed form."

Lambert's book includes a modest portion of nonsense—mostly about Sibelius. But we must remember that it was written at a time when Sibelius was causing even good critics to lose their heads in an astounding way. And we can understand now how after a diet of Stravinsky neo-classicism and Hindemith *Gebrauchsmusik* something as fluent and colorful and agreeable to the ear and moderately enjoyable to the mind as Sibelius might go to their heads.

August 19, 1944

A reader has written to ask me to explain what I referred to in Heifetz's playing when, in my May 20 review of the General Motors broadcast of Mendelssohn's Concerto, I spoke of his "vulgarity." Also, not recalling any comment on Huberman in my column, and having been "astonished and captivated by [his] marvelous delivery and breadth of musicianship," he asked how I ranked him.

No recordings of Huberman performances have been issued for several years, and I happen not to have heard him in concerts; hence there has been no occasion for me to write about him recently. But in the past there were occasions for me to speak of the qualities that added up, for me, to the playing of a great artist. These were chiefly qualities of his phrasing—subtly inflected but continuously large-spanned (what I imagine my correspondent means by breadth of musicianship).

I have answered the question about Huberman first because it has enabled me to state some of the qualities of a good musician—to which I can oppose the qualities of a poor musician that I have often heard and pointed out in Heifetz's playing. Let my correspondent listen to Heifetz's recorded performances of Mozart and Beethoven sonatas: he will hear the line of the phrase constantly broken by mincing little swells on every two or three notes, often with wailing upward slides. Let him listen to the

recorded performance of Franck's Sonata—the passage in the third movement beginning at a point about 1.75 inches in from the first groove of side 4, which Franck directs shall be played *molto dolce e tranquillo*, and in which therefore the notes should flow quite evenly: he will hear Heifetz's mannered, distorted delivery of the passage—the constant alternation between excessive holding back and hurrying of the notes. All this, with its effect of exaggerated, ostentatious, and obvious expressiveness, is the sort of thing one would hear in a performance of Rubinstein's *Melody in F* for the audience in a vaudeville or movie theater; in performances of Mozart, Beethoven, and Franck it is just as cheap, sentimental, vulgar; and it was to what I first described as Heifetz's "pretentiously mannered and sentimentally distorted phrasing" that I later applied the term "phraseological vulgarities," in my May 20 review.

One thing interests me further in my reader's letter, and that is his attitude. He believed I had heard something he did not hear, and asked me to tell him what it was. This leaves me surprised, admiring, and grateful, because it is not the usual attitude of people in his situation. Most people are unable to make the distinction between Heifetz's playing of the violin and his playing of Mozart, or even to imagine or understand that distinction: what else is there in performance of music than producing the sounds the composer has written; and what can be wrong in a performance in which fast passages are produced with breath-taking speed and agility, and slow ones with breath-taking beauty of sound? As a result all performances by celebrated performers have equal validity for these people: they can understand that Schnabel plays Mozart differently from Casadesus, or Beecham differently from Koussevitzky, but not that one man plays the music well and the other poorly. And some cannot believe that anyone else can make these distinctions and evaluations; so that a reader once attributed my criticisms of Heifetz, which he characterized as "snide and ill-mannered impertinence," to personal animosity, accused me of attempting to tear Heifetz down in order to elevate Szigeti for similar

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personal reasons, and of doing the same thing with Koussevitzky for the benefit of Toscanini and Beecham, and assured me that only the musical public, which had put Heifetz and Koussevitzky where they were, could remove them. And even a better-mannered reader, who could conceive of my finding things to criticize in Heifetz's playing, could not understand how I could go so far as to apply a term like "vulgarity" to a violinist of Heifetz's eminence.

In addition to not understanding certain things in music and performance these readers didn't understand some very important things about the nature and purpose of criticism and about the mutual relation of critic and reader. I intend some time very soon to deal at length with the idea of the critic as a person whom one reads for the perceptions that enable one to hear and understand what one otherwise would not have heard and understood, and to develop the consequences of this idea for the reader. Right now I will only repeat my answer to those who objected: *The Nation* does not employ me to genuflect before eminences or before the limited perceptions of the great musical public; it employs me as an expert to hear and to report what I hear. If someone else cannot hear what I heard, or prefers to ignore it, that doesn't mean that I must not hear it or speak of it. And if what I hear from a violinist as eminent as Heifetz impresses me as a phraseological vulgarity, that is the term I have to use to describe it.

September 2, 1944

There was an occasion last spring to formulate my ideas on the critic's function and his relations to artist and reader. The occasion was a panel-discussion of dance criticism at the Y.M.H.A., in which I participated as a critic in another field who might have ideas on criticism in general that would be applicable to criticism of the dance. The subject of the discussion was *What Is Fair and Unfair in Dance Criticism?*; and

my way of answering that question was to state what I thought was possible in criticism—what a critic could and should do.

Recently, I said, there have been people who have thought themselves ideally equipped to write about music for the lay newspaper or magazine audience by the fact that they operated on a level of insight, judgment, and taste no more professional or educated than their readers' own. But the idea used to be that the man who wrote about an art should be someone who could give his readers the benefit of an ability to see or hear more than they could. And that, I think, is the correct idea. The critic, properly, is someone with superior powers of perception who says to his reader: "This is what I have seen or heard"; after which the reader looks or listens, and says: "Why yes—how true, how wonderful!" But of course he also may say: "Why no—I don't see or hear that; I see or hear this." So with the critic's evaluation of what he perceives: "Why yes," says the reader, "such qualities make the work bad." But he also may say: "Why no—."

I went on to point out that according to this conception of the critic's activity he writes for his reader, not for the artist. And I made this point because the artist has a tendency to think that the critic operates primarily for him. Aaron Copland, for example, has argued that it is the critic's duty to nurture the artist—to tell him what is good in his work and what is bad, and presumably what can be improved and how to improve it. That, I contend, is not correct. If we assume, as we should, that the artist works from inner necessities, then it is for him to produce whatever those necessities dictate, and for the critic only to report to his reader what they have dictated. It is true, I added, that in such a report the critic does have certain obligations to the artist—the obligation to bring an unprejudiced and receptive mind to the artist's work, to keep that mind entirely on that work, and to report honestly what it finds there; the obligation, in other words, to write a criticism of the work, not to misuse it and misrepresent it in an exhibition of the critic's own cleverness, his wit, his learning, his pet ideas, his amusing style.

But the critic who operates with competence and with un-self-conscious absorption in the work he is dealing with—this critic operates as he should, and with fairness to artist and reader.

All of this could be elaborated; what I want to say a little more about right now is the reader's "Why no—." As I have described the critic's activity it consists in using his powers of perception and evaluation to animate those of his reader. To animate—not to dictate: what the critic tells the reader about a piece of music the reader can accept as true for himself only if his own ears and mind verify it. But if the critic may not impose his greater insights on the reader, neither may the reader impose his lesser insights on the critic.

The reader who tries to do this, as I pointed out recently, is someone who, because he cannot hear something, does not believe anyone else can. One could say that he doesn't credit even the critic with insights greater than his own; but the truth is that he isn't aware of insights being involved. And this is only one of the misconceptions that add up to his ignorance about music and everything connected with it—composition, performance, criticism. He has no understanding of what sort of personal resources—of mind, emotion, character, experience—are involved, along with mere facility in sound, in the creation of good music; or of such personal resources being involved, along with mere facility of fingers, in good performance. And he has no understanding of the fact that an equipment of the same professional caliber—both in sensitiveness to the medium and in personal resources—is involved in good criticism. That is why he is shocked by the critic's disrespect for a composer or violinist, but feels free to be arrogant to the critic.

It is also why he is shocked by the critic's intensity about what he thinks good or bad. That is, he doesn't realize it is the intensity of the professional who cares deeply about his art. Toscanini becomes enraged when a phrase is not as it should be, because that phrase is something he cares about. And Shaw once wrote: "People have pointed out evidences of personal feeling in my notices as if they were accusing me of a mis-

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demeanor, not knowing that a criticism written without personal feeling is not worth reading. It is the capacity for making good or bad art a personal matter that makes a man a critic."

September 30, 1944

I have just seen the documentary war film *Attack* in which passages from the last movement of Rachmaninov's D minor Piano Concerto are dubbed in every now and then without regard for the sense of the scenes, or for the incompatibility of the flashy rhetoric of the music with the sobriety and honesty of the film. This is sheer debasement of the film; but no less indignity is committed on *The Memphis Belle* by the especially composed music which intrudes on some of the sequences to draw attention to its meaningless "modern" ugliness. These two experiences have raised in my mind the questions that other experiences led me to ask in this column once before—whether music is essential to films; whether it should not be possible to use the pictures by themselves not only to convey the bare sense of any situation but to give this sense all the desired emotional heightening and impact; whether a documentary film at any rate should not include music only if the music happens to be part of the facts which the film presents. I am not contending that music should never be used in films, but only questioning the prevailing idea that it must always be used. I have witnessed effective use of music in films; but I also have had opportunities to observe the effectiveness of films without music; and *Attack* and *Memphis Belle*, it seems to me, would speak powerfully by themselves—more powerfully this way than when they have to fight their way to our minds through trashy and ugly music.

October 28, 1944

What difference Stokowski's reflector made in the front of the parquet of City Center I don't know; but in Q 1 under the balcony, where I sat for his concert, the sound was still shut

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out, with the result that instead of being all around one, as in Carnegie Hall, it came only from the front and without resonance and richness. To satisfy my curiosity about this I had to listen to all the tonal fussing and swelling and heaving in constantly changing tempos that constituted Stokowski's performance of the *Eroica* (it was, wrote Mr. Downes, "one that for formal coherence and proportion would pass the most exigent tests, but it was also of an intensity and pathos, within the classic mold, which nobly and intensely communicated the composer's spirit"); and the directors of the City Center will get no applause from me for sponsoring the corruption of the public's musical understanding with such falsification of great music.

The first of Toscanini's September broadcasts for the armed forces overseas began with the Overture to *Zampa* and ended with Sousa's *Semper Fidelis* and *El Capitán*. And it occurred to me that even a musically unsophisticated person listening to these marches that he knew well might be struck by the things that were different about them this time—not just the general liveliness and buoyancy, but the contrapuntal melodies that he had never before heard so clearly outlined and so beautifully modeled; and that in this way he might get an idea of the differences possible in performances, and of the particular qualities of Toscanini's performances, which previously he had thought people only pretended they could hear in order to show their superior understanding.

The second program included the loveliest of Mozart's early symphonies—K.201 in A major; and the performance recalled to me the first time I heard the work—in Vienna early in 1929. All the uproar at that place and time was over Furtwängler; but the great performances I heard were those conducted by Richard Strauss; and one of them was the sharp-contoured and sharp-witted performance of K.201 that he produced with the third-rate Vienna Symphony (not the Vienna Philharmonic). Since then I have heard only the perversely ponderous recorded

performance of Beecham, and the Koussevitzky performances that are well characterized by a Cambridge reader's phrase about Koussevitzky's Mozart: "a brilliant façade which conceals the absence of thought." But from Toscanini I heard at last another superb statement of the work: the first movement moderate in pace, fluent and exquisite in contour, all grace and delicate poignancy in effect; the second movement with the same grace and poignancy; the minuet with its amusing fanfare sharp and witty, its trio exquisitely poignant again; the finale a rush of high spirits and verve.

November 4, 1944

The period in the twenties when the talk was of jazz as the proper material for American symphonic music and of Gershwin as its proper composer was recalled to me not only by Koussevitzky's references to Gershwin in his *Life* article but by Toscanini's broadcast of the Piano Concerto with Oscar Levant last spring—the first performance I had heard since a Stadium performance with Gershwin himself around 1927. I heard Gershwin's performance of the work a half-dozen times in all—enough to fix its general characteristics of deftness, lightness, and precision in my mind. And having for years heard of Levant as the authoritative performer of Gershwin I was completely unprepared for the heaviness and crudeness and lack of precision in his treatment of both instrument and music. The orchestral part, however, was superb.

Then there was Toscanini's broadcast of Respighi's *Pines of Rome*, with its phenomenal concluding crescendo that carried my mind back nineteen years to his memorable first concert with the New York Philharmonic at which I had first heard it. And thinking back further I realized that thirty years had passed since the very first performance I had heard conducted by Toscanini—*Madama Butterfly* with Farrar, in January, 1914. It would be gratifying to recall that at the age of thirteen I knew enough to hear every subsequent performance of his that

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I could get to; actually it was Farrar's performances that I went to; and all I heard Toscanini do before he left the Metropolitan a year later was a few performances of Giordano's *Mme. Sans-Gêne* in which she sang. Great works, great singers, a great conductor, historic performances—all these were available to me each week; but I went to hear Farrar in Puccini or Giordano or worse.

I did, of course, hear the other singers—either when they appeared with her, or when they appeared at the Sunday concerts which I attended in order to hear Carreño or Busoni or Casals or Hofmann or Kreisler play a concerto and a group of solos. It was at such concerts that I heard Frieda Hempel sing *Ernani*, *Ernani*, *involami* and *Voce di Primavera* and other things of the sort; and again it would be gratifying to recall that I was as smart as some of the youngsters nowadays are about such matters, and never missed a chance to hear her. Actually, however, I took her only as another singer with a beautiful voice, and only whenever she happened to come along—in a few Sunday concerts, in a *Marriage of Figaro* with Farrar as the Cherubino, Matzenauer as the Countess, De Luca as the Figaro; in a New York Symphony Mozart program; on one of the records which my family acquired with its first phonograph. That was around 1922; and it was in 1934 that, happening to play over this old record of *Deh vieni, non tardar* from *Figaro* I was overwhelmed by the voice, the musicianship, the style I had not appreciated before. A couple of years later I was similarly impressed by some recorded performances of hers that were broadcast by WQXR, especially by the one of *Der Hölle Rache* from *The Magic Flute*; and I acquired her H.M.V. record of *Caro nome* from *Rigoletto* and *Sempre libera* from *La Traviata*, which caused me to marvel at the life and character which this music acquired from her brilliance of voice and style. But the climax came last year, when someone played an old and battered Victor record of her performance of an aria from *Les Huguenots*, and I heard the supreme example of vocal art of my entire experience. One hears always about

Sembrich, Melba, Tetrizzini, never about Hempel; they were, as records testify, extraordinary singers, but she was, I am convinced, the greatest artist of them all.

I wish that when conditions permit Victor would bring out a volume of her recordings. This is the kind of thing a record company is justified in doing only on an advance subscription basis; and I'm ready to put my money down right now.

November 11, 1944

That period in the twenties, when the talk was of jazz—meaning Whiteman and Gershwin—and its relation to American symphonic music, began, as I recall it, with Gilbert Seldes's article *Toujours Jazz*,⁵¹ which appeared in the *Dial* in the summer of 1923 and became part of his book *The Seven Lively Arts*. Until then my attention had been concentrated on Beethoven and Brahms; Seldes directed it to popular music. And there were some things in his article that I knew were wrong even before I listened to the music they referred to. Thus:

It is syncopation which has so liberated jazz from normal polyphony, from perfect chords, that M. Darius Milhaud is led to expect from jazz a full use of polytonic and atonic harmonies; he notes that in *Kitten on the Keys* there exists already a chord of the perfect major and the perfect minor. The reason why syncopation lies behind all this is that it is fundamentally an anticipation or a suspension in one instrument (or in the bass) of what is going to happen in another (the treble); and the moment in which a note occurs prematurely or in retard is, frequently, a moment of discord on the strong beat.

Evident at once in this passage were the confusions—one crowding on the heels of the other—of mere language and statement, progression of thought, and hashed-up musical terms and facts. It was not certain what Seldes meant by perfect chords,

and therefore by normal polyphony; actually it is normal for a melody or for a voice in a polyphonic texture to pass through tones which don't belong to the underlying chords. The process, moreover, doesn't of itself create any tendency for the melody to move out of the tonality of those chords; and the simultaneous occurrence of F major and minor in *Kitten on the Keys*, I discovered, came about through the fact that the left hand started an ostinato figure containing A-flat, to which the right hand added an ostinato figure containing A-natural. From this and other passages in the article I could see that it was the product of a glib ignoramus who made verbal hubbub and confusion and sheer chaos of thought and style—with parenthetical interpolations slithering in all directions at once—into a critical method.

But one error—quite the most important in the article—I was not equipped to perceive at that time; and this was Seldes's statement that it was not the Negro orchestras but the white—and above all Whiteman's—who had achieved the complete exploitation of jazz. I had not heard the Negro orchestras; but even if I had it is probable that with my background I would have gone along with Seldes when he wrote: "All the free, the instinctive, the wild in Negro jazz which could be integrated into his music, [Whiteman] has kept; he has added to it, has worked his material, until it runs sweetly in his dynamo, without grinding or scraping. . . . He has arrived at one high point of jazz—the highest until new material in the music is provided for him." Nor did I know of anyone rising to object that the Negroes had produced jazz and Whiteman had changed it into something that "ran sweetly": all through the twenties the talk I heard continued to be about Gershwin's songs and Whiteman's performances; and I didn't hear as much as the names of Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, and others until the early thirties.

That initial error led me into another. Seldes contended that syncopation had led jazz composers "to discoveries in rhythm and to a mastery of complications which one finds only in the

great masters of serious music." The most complicated thing I heard—a few measures of a three-note or three-beat figure repeated in the treble against a four-beat bass, obviously not produced by syncopation—seemed to me to have been exceeded by the great masters of serious music; and often the figure received the accentuation of the bass, or the bass that of the figure; so that I got the impression of occasional irregularities in a pretty steadily maintained single meter. But I would not have got this impression from the performances of the Negroes.

By 1932 I had begun to hear jazz and to acquire correct ideas of what it was like. And in 1939 my understanding was vastly increased by the distinction which Wilder Hobson made in the very first paragraph of his *American Jazz Music* ²⁴ between "what the players themselves call 'commercial' music, dance arrangements of popular tunes," and on the other hand music in the "natural musical language which American musicians, Negroes and whites, have been speaking now for more than a quarter-century"; and by his further observation that "all of the commercial forms borrow from [the natural language] to some extent" and "the same men often play both commercially and naturally." There had been, then, the stream of jazz, of spontaneous "hot" performance; and parallel with it, borrowing from it, watering it down, there had been the stream of "commercial" music of the succession of dance bands—"commercial" music in the "sweet" style of bands like Whiteman's or in the "swing" style of bands like Benny Goodman's.

But 1944 finds Seldes writing:

The great trouble with modern (post-Whiteman and Gershwin) hot jazz is that the outsider (hick or amateur listener) can't follow it. Sometimes he thinks there's nothing to follow. First one character does his stuff. Then another. Until maybe nine men have hit terrific smashes into the bleachers. There are no runs or bases hit and no one sacrifices to bring a man home. In short it's not a team. . . . The outstanding (egregious) quality of Condon's band . . . is that

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the players play together. . . . What each man plays has to do with what the man before him played. And what they all play has to do with the composition they are playing and isn't a mere arabesque around a forgotten theme. If that's Chicago jazz, okay Chicago. If it's just Eddie Condon, okay Eddie.

It isn't surprising that Seldes's ignorance has advanced with the years. The amazing thing is to find it printed in the program of a jazz concert by Eddie Condon, who knows what Seldes doesn't know about "hot" jazz, both pre- and post-Whiteman, and who himself played in the little "hot" bands that in 1928 produced superbly integrated performances like the Miff Mole *Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble*.

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Listening to a Beethoven or Mozart concerto conducted by Toscanini one hears not merely a carefully rehearsed orchestral part, but one in which familiar phrases acquire amazingly new contours and inflections and significance, and counterpoints and figurations previously unheard in the mass of sound emerge with startling clarity and impact from the newly transparent textures; and one hears all these things related in a continuous, rhythmically elastic progression which is built up into a coherent and powerful structure. It is an exciting experience; and it remains that even when the structure is built up around nothing—around, that is, the characterless flow of sounds produced by Ania Dorfman in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1. Or around something as alien in style as Artur Rubinstein's playing in the Concerto No. 3.

There was an occasion ten years ago when Iturbi, in performances of Mozart concertos with Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic, matched the orchestra's powerful statements with clearly and boldly outlined phrases that were in striking contrast

to his usual salon-music style in Mozart. And listening to Toscanini's performance of the orchestral introduction of Beethoven's concerto I expected the same thing to happen again: no pianist, I thought, could be unaffected by its hair-raising power. Its conclusion, however, brought from the piano not the three upward rushes with the impact of cannon-shots that I expected to hear, and that I have heard in some other performances, but three scales with the on-the-surface brilliance of Rubinstein's style emphasized by the on-the-surface sound of the particular Steinway piano that he chose to play on. And this discrepancy in style and effect between the orchestral and the piano parts continued throughout the movement. In the slow movement Rubinstein gave florid melodic passages the contours he gives such passages in the slow movement of Chopin's E minor; and even the finale, which he played best, was not without its alien details.

In the present Beethoven series only Serkin's playing in the Concerto No. 4 has fitted well into the Toscanini framework. It was often unimpressive in its mere fluency if one recalled Schnabel's sharply contoured or subtly inflected phrasing at the same point (the first-movement cadenza was one such point), but taken by itself it had the right over-all character and sufficient vitality, and also sufficient tranquility where this was called for—the nature of the work producing fewer than the usual number of occasions where one hears the shrilly percussive sound as one sees the tossed head and upflung arm that endear Serkin to the great musical public.

December 30, 1944

The great radio public hasn't heard *Fidelio*; and not only does it tend to think of what it doesn't hear as not worth hearing, but it has been told that the opera is one of Beethoven's failures. So it was a good thing for Toscanini to include *Fidelio* in his series of Beethoven broadcasts; though there is a question

whether the public's ears were able to fight through its preconceptions to hear the wonderful expressiveness, dramatic force, and spiritual elevation of the music. Also there is the question whether a public accustomed to regard the staggering piling-up of *Leitmotiven* at the end of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* as the highest development of operatic method is capable of appreciating quiet climactic sublimities like *Contessa, perdono* at the end of Mozart's *Figaro* or *O Gott! welch' ein Augenblick!* at the end of *Fidelio*.

Some years ago the late William J. Henderson, in a week-end article about opera, contended that since it was a form of poetic drama it could have the best music ever written but would not hold the interest of its audience if it was not good theater. His example was *Fidelio*: how often was it given; how much public approval did it get when it was given? And why? It had "one great vocal number, a *scena drammatica* for soprano, two good choruses which would be better placed in an oratorio than in a drama, and an overture which is one of the immortal masterpieces of orchestral music"—not enough to save a work with "one scene, no more, completely saturated with the blood of the theater."

But at that point Henderson still had two-thirds of his column to fill (the intellectual crimes that are committed by the journalists with space to fill, a living to earn!); and continuing with what had operated against good music drama he referred to the public's love of the exceptional singing voice—"Tristan und Isolde entered upon a new lease of life when the public became emotional over Mme. Flagstad's Isolde"—and ended by contending that a new Caruso would bring back all the works with brilliant tenor roles. "For in the opera house there is and always has been a resort for those who do not take the drama in any of its forms very seriously and who find life more delightful when they can listen for a brief moment to beautiful sounds and not have to do any thinking."

We had, then, the contention that it is drama the public

wants, and the contention that the public does not take the drama seriously and wants only beautiful singing; the contention that *Fidelio* fails because it is not dramatic, and the contention that *Tristan* succeeds because of a Flagstad. But actually *Tristan* had not been headed for the rubbish-heap before Flagstad's arrival; it had been one of the staples in the Metropolitan's repertory not only when it had been sung well by Leider and Melchior but in all the years when it had been sung badly by other sopranos and tenors. And it certainly had not held its place because Isolde's long narrative and her long verbal duel with Tristan in the first act, their long duet and King Marke's long monologue in the second act were exciting theater.

The English critic E. J. Dent once observed that the only thing which made a character in an opera convincing and interesting was the music he was given to sing; and that it did not matter that the music delayed the action, because as long as it held our interest it destroyed our sense of time. In other words the drama in an opera must be in its music; that is where it is in those long scenes without any action in *Tristan*; and it was the music of *Tristan* that had held the public's interest in those scenes and kept the work in the Metropolitan's repertory even as it had been performed by poor singers and the wretched orchestra of the Gatti-Casazza period. So with *Fidelio*: it happens to have the lively and clear dramatic action that *Tristan* lacks; but more important is the fact that it has some of the greatest dramatic music outside of Mozart's operas, ranging from the charming opening duet to things like the quartet *Mir ist so wunderbar*, Leonore's *Abscheulicher!*, her duet with Rocco, the introduction to the dungeon scene and Florestan's *Gott! welch' Dunkel hier*, the duet, trio, and quartet that follow, and *O Gott! welch' ein Augenblick!* at the end.

How often is it given, asked Henderson, and with how much public approval? Constantly and with enormous public approval in German Europe, is the answer; and if that isn't so in this country it proves a defect not in *Fidelio* but in impresarios and

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public. In 1936, when Henderson asked his questions, Mozart's *Figaro* and Verdi's *Otello* had been out of the Metropolitan's repertory for somewhere around twenty years; would he have contended that they too were poor theater insufficiently compensated for by the music? Or would he have conceded the operation of insensitiveness to greatness, of indifference to it, of inertia? For one thing inertia of ideas: *Fidelio* has been produced and loved in Europe because it has been thought of as an opera worthy of production and love; when managers have not produced it or the public has not admired it in this country that has been because of the idea in their minds that it has only "one scene . . . completely saturated with the blood of the theater" and only "one great vocal number, a *scena drammatica* for soprano, two good choruses which would be better placed in an oratorio," and so on.

January 13, 1945

The work Tovey used as his example in his exposition of the Mozart concerto form was the Piano Concerto K.503. It is performed more rarely than some of the other great examples in the series; and its greatness is less easily perceived: I was disappointed by my first hearing of it a couple of years ago; and audiences and critics were unimpressed when Schnabel and the New York Philharmonic under Szell gave it its first New York performances recently. But listening to it as it was rehearsed and performed on this occasion I became excitedly aware of the things that had escaped my ears and mind the first time.

K.503 in the series of concertos corresponds to K.551 (the so-called *Jupiter*) in the series of symphonies, in what I would call the Mozart C-major grandeur and radiance. It is, as one reader observed a year ago, "one of those works in which Mozart's primary interest is architectural, and whose cumulative effect is one of grandeur, sweep, and power." Thus it begins not with one of those themes with immediate sensuous appeal, like the opening themes of K.453 or 488 or 595, but, in the words of Tovey,

"with a majestic assertion of . . . C major by the whole orchestra, with mysterious soft shadows that give a solemn depth to the tone." And those mysterious soft shadows created after the initial radiance of the entire orchestra by delicate woodwind textures, and a second time with a wonderful shift to C minor, are subtleties contrived for the eighteenth-century ear that are likely to escape listeners today.

Another such subtlety is created with a reiterated rhythmic figure, which in the first orchestral tutti is carried to a point where it is trumpeted forth on the note G and leads to C minor: when this dominant of C minor is reached again in the solo portion Mozart contrives the surprise of the piano's modulation to E flat major; and when, in the second orchestral tutti, the rhythmic figure is trumpeted forth, as before, on the note G, the G's are answered breath-takingly by the piano's reiteration of the same figure on the note B, in a shift to E minor that is the first of a series of similar bold modulations in the development.

And there are what my correspondent described as "those subtle and exciting variations and transformations of Mozart's concerto recapitulations," whose effect comes from "the fact of an accepted and established idiom, which makes the wit of Mozart and Haydn so pointed, and which gives their sallies, developments, and variations their subtlety and poignancy."

It is such effects, contrived for the delight of eighteenth-century listeners with their highly developed sense of key and their familiarity with the "accepted and established idiom" of the period, that K. 503 offers, instead of the profusion of lovely themes with which some of the other concertos make an immediate appeal to listeners of today.

The fine integration of solo and orchestral parts in the recent performances was not without occasional lack of precision in gearing (chiefly in the slow movement). And though Schnabel's playing was sheer perfection in clarity and subtlety of articulation, it lacked, for Carnegie Hall, the projective force that might have carried over to the audience the grandeur of

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the first movement and the delicious little jokes in the piano figuration throughout, but especially in the finale.

January 20, 1945

In C. E. Montague's *A Hind Let Loose*³⁷ one of the characters reflects on the nature and pleasure of real writing—which is not “to fit word on thought—no; to say this made two things of them—but to hold the thought, to force it up and up the scale of clarity to where it and some unsought word rushed together and a new thing came to life.” He is led to this reflection by a piece of writing that had not been produced in that way. It had begun as an imaginary newspaper concert review: “Descanting . . . on the ways of the musical critics . . . Fay had said that a notice as written by any of them would apply just as well, and no better, to any one concert than to any other; more—he had spouted . . . a typical, universal concert-notice, true of all concerts past, present and to be, with unprejudiced blanks duly left for the names of any performers whatever.” And suddenly faced with the need of a review of an exhibition of paintings he had not seen, Fay had filled the blanks with the names of the painters, and the meaningless statements had become a typical, universal art-notice. Thus, “Mr. Portland has a talent—we use the word advisedly—to which it is only too easy to do less than justice. He may, as some think, have not yet compassed the whole ascent from the mood of graceful prose to that of serene and elevated poetic feeling. But at least it is something to have the ground clear and unquestionably fertile, for the seeds of future breadth and resolution.”

I was reminded of this the other day by a real-life example of the meaningless jargon of newspaper concert-reviewing. “Mr. Breisach,” wrote Olin Downes after a performance of *The Magic Flute*, “gave a musicianly and generally meritorious reading of the score. It is not to be concluded that if he continued to interpret this score he will necessarily fail to confer upon it more of the tension, fantasy, and sparkle that permeate the

miraculous composition." As for the practice of writing about what one hasn't heard, the example occurs to me of a statement²⁷ that Beecham's recorded performance of Mozart's Symphony K.201 was a transitional one in the direction of his "more recent performances" of the work—performances which the writer had not heard for the simple reason that Beecham had not given them. This was an example of the critic's being able to make points about invented material that he would not be able to make about fact; and some of Virgil Thomson's reviews and articles are further examples of this on a more elaborate scale and of course a much higher critical level. Thomson himself invents the data that he works up into the elaborate constructions of thought about Schnabel's playing of Beethoven or about Toscanini's playing of almost anything or about the way the great American orchestras came about and function, which he would not be able to work up out of what Schnabel or Toscanini or the orchestras actually do; but on a lower level there is the common store of invented material on every subject, out of which the writers go on producing their annual article on the problem of American music or the state of opera in America that they would not be able to produce out of the mere facts of those subjects.

By ignoring such fact—that lovers of serious music in this country show the same interest in opera, when they have the opportunity to hear it, as lovers of serious music in Europe, but that they don't have the Europeans' widespread opportunities to hear it because opera is too expensive to pay for itself and doesn't receive the government subsidies in this country which keep it going everywhere in Europe—writers can go on writing about opera not having taken root in this country and why: because it is given in foreign languages which prevent people from understanding it, or because its librettos are poor drama, or because old-fashioned staging converts it into musty museum-pieces with no appeal to minds of our own day. I have in the past pointed out that one sees opera-goers in Vienna reading librettos; and that one goes to the opera not for the drama of

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Norma or *Aida* but for the music into which that drama is translated. Let me now say something about staging.

I once attended a performance of *Lucia* by the Milan Scala company which was made extremely effective and moving first of all by the respect and love with which Toscanini treated every phrase of the music, and secondly by the similar respect and love that were evident in the staging. This did not reconstruct *Lucia* in the way the Moscow Art Theater Musical Studio reconstructed *Carmen*, nor produce it in a "modern" style like that of Meyerhold; it gave validity to the work's own style and conventions, and in this way gave the opera the value it could have for a modern audience. It is this attitude of respect for their essential quality, and loving care in its achievement, that *Lucia* and other operatic classics need; it is this that the minds of today need, in so far as they need such classics. It is this, moreover, that one may ask of an institution like the Metropolitan; and one is then asking it to perform the function of a museum; but that is the Metropolitan's proper function in relation to a work like *Lucia*. A museum piece—whether it is a painting of Constable, a novel of Jane Austen, or an opera of Donizetti—is capable of affecting us by its qualities as a work of art; and what in each instance performs the function of a museum makes it possible for us to be affected. What we may object to is not to the performing of the function, but to its being performed badly—to the painting being obscured by grime or poor hanging, the novel being published with errors or cuts, the opera being badly sung or staged in a way that makes no sense. And for the function to be performed well Jane Austen doesn't need to be rewritten in the style of Hemingway, Constable doesn't need to be repainted in the style of Picasso, and Donizetti doesn't need to be produced in the style of Meyerhold. To say, as some do, that the style of Meyerhold is necessary to interest Americans in opera is to say that opera itself has nothing to interest Americans—which is true only of some Americans; and then it may follow that we must do something with those Americans, but not that we must do things to opera.

January 27, 1945

If you have wondered why the Metropolitan's productions of opera are discussed so little in this column the reason is that its press department has not been able to persuade Assistant Manager Earle Lewis that a review in *The Nation* is worth the money he can get for a pair of good seats. And if I am able to report on *The Marriage of Figaro* it is because the press department managed to wangle back from one of the newspapers a pair of the excellent seats that are permanently assigned to the daily press.

Figaro as performed the last two seasons has been the greatest experience one could have at the Metropolitan; and it is still that, even though this year's performance is not up to last year's. Where Bruno Walter's treatment of the music was relaxed and spacious, Erich Leinsdorf's is tense and driving: he rushes hectically not only through particular pieces of music—through everything up to Cherubino's first aria, for example—but from one thing to the next. Thus, not only is his pace for *Dove sono* rather fast for the meditative character of both words and music, but he does not pause long enough for Eleanor Steber's pianissimo singing of the reprise to create the wonderful effect it did last year. So throughout, and worst of all at the end, when he goes from the hushed exclamations at the Countess's unexpected entrance to the Count's *Contessa, perdono!* without a pause sufficient to prepare the audience for this concluding sublimity.

On the other hand I was newly impressed this time by Herbert Graf's imagination and skill in laying out the lines of the action on the stage and filling in detail. But I still feel that a few of the details should be changed. In the second act Susanna tries one of her caps on Cherubino; but she has measured herself against him, and should try one of her dresses on him. During this scene, moreover, Steber may intend the Countess to appear distraught; but what she achieves is an appearance of lacking interest and not being involved in what is going on;

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and the Countess should be an interested onlooker. Far worse is what Sayao does in the Countess's cloak and hat in the last act: it is the antics of a child in the clothes of an adult, not the exaggeratedly grand movements of a maid in the clothes of her mistress; it gets laughs, but so would the dramatically right thing. The mistake may be Graf's; or he may lack the power to correct Sayao, who is guilty of other excesses—mostly of pertness—throughout the opera.

That is the only defect in the work of a superb cast. The outstanding performance is Steber's Countess: as I wrote last year, nobody I have seen in the role conveyed as she does the neglected young wife's beauty, spirit, and wounded pride, her humiliation at having to involve herself with her servants in stratagems against her husband; and she sings the part beautifully, using a small but lovely voice with fine musical taste and moving expressiveness. As it happens, Sayao also has a small voice of brighter timbre, which she uses with equal taste and expressiveness, and which blends perfectly with Steber's; so that their singing of the *Letter Duet* is one of the most enchanting moments in the opera. The Cherubino this year is Risë Stevens—amusingly gawky, and with her singing free of the tremolo and the explosiveness in phrasing that afflicted it two years ago. Brownlee's Count is good. And Pinza's Figaro—rather than his Don Giovanni—is, in my opinion, his best performance. (What is good in his Figaro is not good in his Don Giovanni: it makes him a Giovanni, not a Don.) As for the smaller parts in the ensemble, they are excellently done by Baccaloni, De Paolis, and the rest.

The first of Lotte Lehmann's series of three lieder-recitals was devoted to Schubert and Schumann, and provided another impressive demonstration of the art that has been refined and perfected by the need of discretion in the use of an aging voice. The voice, at this concert, was still lovely; the art more moving than ever; but they were revealed in a program whose too many archnesses and inanities imposed less strain on the voice than

they did, after a while, on the hearer's—or at any rate on this hearer's—patience. However there was every now and then an outstanding song which was made into an unforgettable experience. If we have seen and heard the last of Lehmann's great performances in the opera house we may still experience her gifts of dramatic characterization and projection in the concert hall—in her side-splitting performance of Schumann's *Kartenlegerin*, among others.

March 31, 1945

In his *New Republic* review of Tovey's latest books Ralph Bates pointed out that Tovey's wonderfully illuminating statements about music are almost entirely incidental to his expositions of the progress of ideas and form in particular works; and that such expositions are further enriched in the same incidental way by his general literacy. Bates cited, as an example, the discussion of the nature of tragedy that occurs in one of the essays on chamber music; then, revealing that the essay is concerned with a work by Brahms who is today "least enjoyed by really intelligent listeners," Bates concluded that the fact "that Tovey thought him one of the very great masters makes one decide to think again, and if possible to feel anew, about that unfashionable genius."

That argument would require one to be similarly influenced by what Tovey wrote about C. Hubert H. Parry—for example, about his choral works "with their unsurpassable truth and depth in the setting of words." And Bates stopped with verbal argument in a matter where any number of words are less conclusive than even one action. It would have taken too long to do the complete job; but he should have listened at least to the finale of Brahms's Piano Quartet Opus 60 that was the occasion of Tovey's remarks about tragedy, and reported whether the experience had brought him to a new conclusion about it—not so much whether he had found it to be tragedy, as whether it had proved, as tragedy, to be convincing and moving; or in other

words whether as music it had communicated something genuinely felt which had dictated the flow of substance into form, or had communicated only pumped-up attitudes through a synthetically contrived large structure. The "really intelligent listeners" Bates referred to include some who have listened again to Brahms after reading Tovey, and who haven't discovered anything new in Brahms but have learned something important about Tovey—that his scholar's and composer's interest in the mechanics of musical construction sometimes leads him to hear great or important utterance where there is only elaborate manipulation of the devices of melody, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration; and that, as a result, the statements about music and the general obiter dicta that are so illuminating and enriching are elicited by poor music as well as good.

No; where men like Brahms and Parry are concerned one does better to be influenced by Shaw, who had sharp perception and no tolerance for "attempts to pass off the forms of music for music itself." Such attempts as Brahms's when, in the German Requiem, he "sets a pedal-pipe booming and a drum thumping the dominant of the key for ten minutes at a stretch, while the other instruments and the voices plough along through every practicable progression in or near the key, up hill from syncopation to syncopation, and down dale from suspension to suspension." Or Parry's *Job*, in which there were, said Shaw, "no end of nice little things I could point out about the workmanship shown in the score, its fine feeling, its scrupulous moderation, its entire freedom from any base element of art or character, and so on through a whole epitaph of pleasant and perfectly true irrelevancies"—the only important thing being that "there is not a bar in it that comes within fifty thousand miles of the tamest line in the poem."

Shaw, I might add, was condescended to recently by one of the worst of the musicological Savonarolas, Professor Paul Henry Lang, who has made the musical atmosphere hideous with his harsh-voiced denunciations. A friend reports that Lang referred to Shaw in a recent article on Wagner in the *Saturday*

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Review of Literature, saying that in his *Perfect Wagnerite* Shaw had correctly understood something or other about Wagner's *Ring* but had of course been hampered by his lack of knowledge of music. The kind of knowledge the musicologists have Shaw didn't have; but they, on the other hand, haven't the kind he had.

April 14, 1945

On the maps, provided by critics and teachers, on which I had to depend in my youthful exploration of the world of music Berlioz was marked off as a desert: I first read about the *Fantastic* Symphony, for example, in the *New York Times* review of Mengelberg's first concert with the National Symphony in 1921, in which Richard Aldrich deplored the waste of effort on a hopelessly arid and banal work. The truth about Berlioz—as about a number of other musical matters—was something I had to discover through my own experience of the music; and one experience—a performance of *Harold in Italy* by Toscanini with the New York Philharmonic around 1930—had the effect of revelation: I found myself following Berlioz's mind in the finale with new understanding and delight; and I was now ready to appreciate the marvels in the earlier movements, in *Romeo and Juliet* and other works, and to realize that Berlioz was the greatest musical artist of the nineteenth century after the Beethoven-Schubert period.

The marvels in his music are the product of a great melodic gift, a subtle harmonic sense, a magician's ear for the orchestra, which operate in completely individual ways in the service of an individual mind and imagination. The Berlioz melody is an exfoliating progression, with unexpected turns and exquisite inflections which pivot on, and are enriched by, equally unexpected and exquisite moves in the underlying harmony, and with further enrichment by the subtly contrived instrumental colors. You can hear all this in the second movement of *Harold*—in the developing series of statements by the strings, each

moving unpredictably to its conclusion in a sustained note that is echoed by a magical note of the horn and wonderful murmurings of the other winds. And in the third movement, where, after preliminary pastoral pipings, the English horn begins a serenade with two simple phrases which leave you unprepared for the ravishing subtleties of melodic turn of phrase and harmonic and instrumental coloring that follow. As for the finale, there the sharp and mercurial Berlioz mind runs riot in an extreme dynamic and rhythmic activation of the material—by sharp contrasts of loud and soft and sudden crescendos and decrescendos in the brilliant sonorities; by antiphonal tossing of these sonorities between choirs of the orchestra; and above all by abrupt shifts in their rhythmic impetus through irregularities of accent, grouping, and so on.

Victor's new recording of Koussevitzky's performance with the Boston Symphony and William Primrose as viola soloist has enabled me to document my dissatisfaction with the performance when I heard it in Carnegie Hall last November. The work did not have the effect I remembered and expected; and I was aware of one thing that lessened its effectiveness: its sections fell apart into detached episodes, instead of cohering in a unified utterance. And I can see now that the performance is the product of a man with an ear for sonority but no feeling for pace—either for the single tempo that will give a passage of music its right character and meaning, or for the several tempos that will give the sections of a piece of music coherence.

If it had been Koussevitzky's performance of the finale that I had heard in 1930 I doubt that the effect would have been revelation; for at his slow pace the music hasn't the lightness and élan it should have, but is stodgy and heavy. In the third movement Berlioz gives a metronome number for the *Allegro assai* of the introductory section, and another metronome number for the *Allegretto* of the serenade to implement his direction that one measure of the *Allegretto* shall take the time of two measures of the *Allegro assai*. But Koussevitzky slows down the *Allegretto*, altering its relation to the *Allegro assai*, and chang-

ing what Berlioz intended as a fairly animated serenade into a rather lugubrious lament. Later in the movement there is a repetition of the *Allegro assai* leading again to the *Allegretto*; and this time Berlioz further integrates the two by continuing the sharply rhythmed accompaniment-figure of the *Allegro assai* into the half-as-fast *Allegretto* as a background for the serenade. Clearly the accompaniment-figure must continue unaltered in speed and character, and Berlioz's directions for the two tempos must be obeyed literally; but Koussevitzky again slows down the *Allegretto*, and with it the accompaniment-figure of the *Allegro assai*. And there is another example of this involving two movements: when the viola solo of the introduction of the first movement recurs in the course of the second movement it should move at the same pace—as it does if one takes Berlioz's tempos for the movements; but with Koussevitzky's altered tempos it comes out enormously slower in the second movement.

April 28, 1945

"What an artist!" exclaimed the lady in front of me to her husband, after Lehmann, with a sudden explosion of emotional intensity, had blasted the concluding phrase of Schubert's *Täuschung* out of relation to what had preceded. That was what the explosion had been intended to get the lady to think; but the means which Lehmann used in much of *Die Winterreise* to impress her Y.M.H.A. audience with what an artist she was made the opposite impression on me. For they were not what I consider art in the singing of such songs. When the lady in front of me said "What an artist!" she meant "How intensely she feels!" But a song is a piece of music; hence a singer's feeling for its expressive content must operate through a feeling for the musical phrase, and the expressive effect of the phrases must be achieved, as it is in any other piece of music, by inflection and articulation which makes them part of a plastically continuous and coherent progression. That is what

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Lehmann has done in her Town Hall recitals of recent years; but at the Y.M.H.A. she reverted to her earlier practice of throwing emotions and voice around without regard for the damage to musical phraseology. She may have thought this necessary for success with her Y.M.H.A. audience, and can point out that it succeeded enormously; but I can answer that the audience would also have liked the flawlessly phrased singing that delighted her Town Hall audiences this season, and if she had won her success with good singing she would have done something an artist should do—which is to cultivate good taste in the public by letting it hear what is good and find that it is enjoyable.

But I don't suppose people like Lehmann think very much of such things. It was amazing to observe how in *Wasserflut*—to take only one example—in every one of the places where she was required to wait the three quarter-notes of the measure she shortened the measure to two quarter-notes. It could be a lack of rhythmic sense; but my guess is that it is rather a lack of concern for anything in the song but her own singing; and I guess that from her treatment of the piano parts of the songs. The piano, as Schubert writes for it, not only sets the stage and creates the atmosphere for the voice, but collaborates with it in the development of the musical thought; but it does none of these things effectively when it is reduced, as it is by Lehmann, to a pallid whisper, and often it leaves the vocal phrase or Lehmann's vehemence without a context.

As for her farewell appearance in *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Metropolitan, I wish I had been content with my memories of her earlier performances. It may be that in them she did the same tragic flinging of her head back and her shoulders and arms around and I didn't notice it; but my recollection of those earlier performances is of something done with subtlety; and my impression is that whereas in former years she gave her performance, on this last occasion she gave a performance of herself giving her performance. It is the first act that I am thinking about; and I will complete my account of it by reporting that

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it suffered from the quavering bleat of Emanuel List, and Kurt Baum sang his Italian aria with a constriction which made me fear he would burst a blood vessel, but that Risë Stevens's Octavian was excellent, and what I heard of Nadine Conner's singing in the second act (I left after her first duet with Stevens) was very good, and that Lothar Wallerstein contrived a good show for the first-act levée, and the music seemed to be well handled by Szell.

After the first American performance of Prokofiev's Eighth Piano Sonata by Horowitz at the Russian Consulate in New York I heard Szigeti say: "I found it a lit—tle atavis—tic," and then explain that it was "a return to the early Prokofiev." I took Szigeti to be referring to the finale—an explosion of motor energy in rapid figuration, in an ostinato interlude, and in the figuration again which it builds up to a terrific conclusion—as against the first movement, with its "modern" distorted lyricism such as one hears in Shostakovitch's music. But a musician to whom I mentioned all this replied: "Why no; the phony lyricism is as early as the style of the finale; I can show it to you in Prokofiev's First Sonata; that's where Shostakovitch got it." Whether the "modern" distorted lyricism is phony or not it is there in the first movement; and then the second movement astonishes us with an un—"modern" undistorted lyricism which is even more sugary in its prettiness than the similar second movement of the Seventh Sonata; whereupon the question arises how Prokofiev can ask for our belief in both these things in one man at one time in one work. I should be interested in what the Russians make of the work and say about it.

May 5, 1945

If you have not read Virgil Thomson in the New York *Herald Tribune* you should acquire the collection of some of his daily reviews and Sunday articles in *The Musical Scene*.⁵⁸ He has been writing the only newspaper music criticism worth reading in recent years; and the book contains some of the most penetrating

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and brilliantly phrased comment on music and musicians that has been done in this country or any other.

If I say this I must add that it also contains writing which in its own way is as bad as any that has been done—bad both in quality and in effect. The difference between good and bad can be made clear by two examples. On the one hand Thomson will write that “Mitropoulos has taken over the Philharmonic-Symphony concerts like an occupying army,” and refer to his “Panzer division tactics”; on the other hand, having described the members of the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestras correctly as “expert instrumentalists, internationally trained, prepared to meet any emergency of technique or of style according to accepted formulas,” he will write: “These elements are as mutually replaceable and as anonymous as members of the Roman Catholic clergy. And the summum of their integrity, their consecration, and their efficacy is as beyond question.” In the first example his figure of speech has a connection with the fact of the situation; it expresses vividly and forcefully a perception of something real—that in Mitropoulos’s performances “all is discipline, machine finish, tension, and power,” and “he makes every piece . . . sound nervous and violent.” In the second the figure of speech has no such relation with fact; it represents not a perception but a playing around with fine-sounding ideas and words without regard for the realities of the situation, which in consequence are misstated. The Boston and Philadelphia Orchestras could not exchange their famous solo wind-players or even a considerable number of their rear-rank players without a loss of what, in the functioning of each orchestra, is the result of the long working together of its members. And while “the summum of their integrity, their consecration” has some relevance to the Philadelphia Orchestra, it is laughable in its irrelevance to the New York Philharmonic. The volume contains considerable writing which is bad in this way—which misstates or invents the facts it needs for its spinning out of ideas and phrases.

As for the bad effect of such writing, this column’s favorite

correspondent included in a letter from Belgium a couple of months ago a *Note on the Critic as Pedagogue*, in which he observed: "The critic can perform many functions, but if he has the courage of his convictions, or any convictions at all (and he is not worth the paper he is printed on without them: *vide* the so-called music critics now functioning in N.Y.C.), he must have at least the interest in leading his fellows out of darkness and error that a good revivalist has." To this I would add that whether or not the critic performs a pedagogical function by intention he does so in practice. That is, he cannot write about a piece of music or about its performance by a violinist or a conductor and orchestra without expressing ideas about music, about performance, about violin-playing, about conducting, to readers who are assumed to know less about these things than he and who are intended to benefit by his ability to hear and understand more than they can. And Thomson sometimes leads such readers into, rather than out of, darkness and error.

There are, then, in this volume constructions of thought—about the personalities of the great eastern orchestras, about what was wrong with the New York Philharmonic and how it could be made right, about how we really cannot understand the music of a hundred years ago though we think we do but really do understand the music of today though we think we can't, about Toscanini, Ormandy, Schnabel, Hofmann, about the French style or the French anything—which deal with these things as they exist in a private world of Thomson's, and which are so remote from the realities of our world as to be worthless, and in some instances not to make coherent, understandable sense even in their own terms. But there are also occasions—when Thomson is dealing with Stravinsky's Concerto for two pianos alone, with works of Hindemith, Shostakovich, Roy Harris, David Diamond, Samuel Barber, with performances by Koussevitzky, Artur Schnabel, Horowitz, Szigeti, Heifetz, Jan Peerce, with youngsters like Kapell and Isaac Stern, with the methods and performances of the Metropolitan—occasions when his sharp ears and mind are applied to what is actually

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happening, when his writing in consequence is brilliantly illuminating by its insights and its phraseology, and the results are superb pieces of criticism which I would be glad to have been able to write myself.

When you consider the kind of writing about music with which newspapers are content to disgrace themselves and mislead their readers it is astounding and wonderful that one newspaper should feel impelled to publish writing like Thomson's.

May 19, 1945

Reviews of books sometimes provide performances that are interesting or amusing to watch. Thus, Virgil Thomson's *The Musical Scene* being condescended to, in the *Times*, by Mark Schubart, and Mr. Schubart reminding the reader to take the book's contents as only the opinions of Mr. Thomson—that is something to hug one's sides over. Some may think I am condescending to Mr. Schubart's youth and status; but I am thinking only of his critical opinions. It was the writing of another youthful fourth-string critic, Gama Gilbert, that gave the *Times's* reviewing of music its brief glimmer of distinction and value a few years ago. And it is the traditions, attitudes, and methods of older men that Mr. Schubart is carrying on. Some things are learned quickly, others take time: already Mr. Schubart, in his record reviews, can use even more words to say even less; but he will need additional journalistic experience to produce those book reviews in which an intimate knowledge of the jacket blurb, the preface, and the first pages of a few of the chapters has been conveyed with expansively leaden sententiousness.

The performances on Einstein's *Mozart*¹⁶ have been staggering; but Virgil Thomson, whose reviews of books have usually been poor, came through this time with the only comment I have seen that goes to the heart of what is wrong with Einstein's book. In connection with the vagueness of the descriptive analyses of particular works Thomson wrote: "Perhaps

what bothers me all through is the author's assumption that his undoubted familiarity with the facts of Mozart's life, including his working habits, gives him automatically a true insight into the meaning of Mozart's works. Time after time we are asked to take on faith ex-cathedra statements like the following about a piano piece that has always so bothered everybody that many editions omit it entirely: 'And the *Little Sonata* in B flat major (K.570), dating from February, 1789—perhaps the most completely rounded of them all, the ideal of his piano sonata—also contains counterpoint used humorously in the finale as if in open reference to the secrets of which the work is full.' I must say that here I find Mr. Einstein far more secretive than the piece he is talking about. This kind of pontifical obscurity (and the book is full of it) is unacceptable . . ." I cannot help noting the irony of Thomson's using the words "pontifical obscurity" which so well describe the method and result of some of his own articles. But what is important about those words here is their correctness as applied to Einstein's statement, and to countless statements which tell us as little about other works; and the fact that Einstein, like all the musicologists, knows everything about a work of Mozart except what it says and means.

What is also important, let me add—since Thomson doesn't—is that there is the same "pontifical obscurity" in Einstein's writing about Mozart's life, and that here he appears to assume that having provided factual documentation at certain points he may at other points make vast and cloudy pronouncements without any documented factual basis at all.* On p. 93, in the chapter on Mozart's education, is the statement that "his deep intuition pierced the cultural tendencies of his time, without the help of a single lecture on aesthetics." But immediately, and with no awareness that it largely negates what has just

* [1948] And Einstein also appears to believe that on the basis of the factual documentation in his writing for scholars he may indulge in the pretentious, fantastic pronouncements and other material unsupported by factual documentation in his books for the general public—the *Short History of Music*, *Greatness in Music*, *Music in the Romantic Era*.

been said, there is the statement that "although he had no eye for . . . architecture, sculpture, or painting, he had as a dramatist the finest sense of poetry, both lyric and dramatic." Then, "he must have read a great deal"; and apparently in justification of this, "his library contained books on travel, history, and philosophy; poetical works such as those of Metastasio and Salomon Gessner; Molière's comedies . . . ; Wieland's *Oberon*; and the lyrics of Gellert and Weisse." But no: "whether he actually read all this, nobody knows." But yes: "we do know that he read Metastasio and Gellert. He also knew Fénelon's *Télémaque* and Tasso's *Aminta*; he found amusement in the tales of *The Thousand and One Nights*; and above all he knew a large part of the boundless Italian libretto literature." There is, then, documentation for a qualified statement about Mozart's literary interests, but none for the pronouncement about his deep intuition into the cultural tendencies of his time. And there is also great confusion in the progression of thought.

A far worse example of all this is the passage on the next page about Mozart's "independence in regard to the new currents that heralded the approach of the nineteenth century, the period of Romanticism whose full flowering he might well have lived to witness. Anything that belonged simply to change or transition did not concern him. He was completely a child of the eighteenth century, perhaps, but also of the twentieth; which is another way of saying that he belonged to the eternity of art, and was in no sense a 'forerunner.' Beethoven found a great deal in Haydn that he could take as a point of departure, but very little in Mozart. How should one try to continue Mozart's work? It was possible to strive for perfection on another level, and perhaps even to achieve it; but Mozart's perfection could not be surpassed on its own level. With Haydn, on the other hand, one could in many respects compete on his own terms. Now, Mozart lived in the middle of the period of *Sturm und Drang*, the age of 'sensibility,' the age of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Mozart never mentions Rousseau, although he composed a *Singspiel* on Rousseau's *Devin du Village*, and he must

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have heard Rousseau's name often enough in Paris. Presumably he would have had no use for the philosopher and musical amateur of Geneva, whose call 'Back to Nature' would have meant very little to him. Mozart was on the side of Voltaire, in spite of the ill-tempered words he pronounced upon the sage of Ferney as an obituary. Voltaire, too, belongs to the eighteenth century and to eternity; and he has the same power of dry and pitiless observation, the same irony, the same fierce satire, and the same profound fatalism. Between *Candide* and the G minor Symphony there is a real kinship."

If you have read this passage, as I have, for continuous sense from one sentence to the next, you will agree that Einstein is using his subject to display the extensiveness of his background of knowledge and culture in a confusedly tangential gabble of pontifical generalizations and allusions which can impress only minds as confused or pretentious as his own.

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My mind has kept reverting to Virgil Thomson's remark, in his review of Dr. Alfred Einstein's *Mozart*, that he was bothered by Dr. Einstein's "assumption that his undoubted familiarity with the facts of Mozart's life, including his working habits, gives him automatically a true insight into the meaning of Mozart's works," when Dr. Einstein's actual statements about the works, as Thomson demonstrated by quotation, showed no such insight but rather a "pontifical obscurity." For Thomson was dealing effectively with a very important contention of the musicologists.

The German musicologists now among us exhibit a consciousness of having conferred on the American musical public great benefactions for which it has not shown itself sufficiently grateful. As they see it, they brought the light of knowledge to a land dark with ignorance. There was music here; but there was not the understanding of music possible only with the *Musikwissenschaft* which they brought. And among their benefactions,

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then, have been the books—Leichtentritt's *Music, History, and Ideas*; ³² Lang's *Music in Western Civilization*; ³⁰ Einstein's *Greatness in Music* ¹⁵ and *Mozart: His Character, His Work* ¹⁶ which have provided the public with that knowledge indispensable for understanding: the knowledge of the historical development of music as part of all history; the knowledge, then, of the place of a particular piece of music in the development of musical forms and styles, of its relation to all that was involved in its creation—the personal character of its composer, the social and cultural events, forces, and tendencies of the period by which he was molded as human being and artist.

The first thing to say about this is what Thomson points out about Dr. Einstein, and what is true of the other musicologists: they claim that knowledge is necessary for understanding, but their own knowledge about the relation of the style and form of a piece of music to all that was involved in its creation does not enable them to say anything about the piece that reveals any insight into its nature and effect as a work of art. If their knowledge is necessary for understanding it certainly is not sufficient. But the second thing to say is that the knowledge can be interesting and valuable in and for itself, but it is not necessary for understanding of the music. And, indeed, the third thing to say is that in practice it impedes understanding.

E. M. Forster ²⁰ has made some pertinent observations on what he calls the "pseudo-scholar's" treatment of literature. Forster writes: "Everything he says may be accurate but all is useless because he is moving around books instead of through them, he either has not read them or cannot read them properly. Books have to be read (worse luck, for it takes a long time); it is the only way of discovering what they contain. A few savage tribes eat them, but reading is the only method of assimilation revealed to the west. The reader must sit down alone and struggle with the writer, and this the pseudo-scholar will not do. He would rather relate a book to the history of its time, to events in the life of the author, to the events it describes, above all to some tendency."

In line with these are some of Balanchine's observations⁵ in the February-March issue of *Dance Index* that I mentioned a while ago. A ballet, he says, like a symphony, can be understood without any verbal introduction or explanation; it is not something to read in a program-note but something to see, as the symphony is something to hear. "The important thing in ballet is the movement itself, as it is sound which is important in a symphony. A ballet may contain a story, but the visual spectacle, not the story, is the essential element. The choreographer and the dancer must remember that they reach the audience through the *eye*—and the audience, in its turn, must train itself to *see* what is performed on the stage. . . . Dance is continually in motion, and any single position of a ballet is before the audience's eye for only a fleeting moment . . . but memory combines each new image with the preceding image, and the ballet is created by the relation of each of the positions or movements to those which precede and follow it." And while Balanchine does not state it, the musical analogy is obvious: the audience must train itself to *hear* each new sound, which memory combines with the ones that preceded it, building up the impression of the entire work.

When I say that the knowledge the musicologists consider necessary prevents understanding of music I mean that it interposes itself between people's minds and the music, and substitutes itself for the music in their minds. Look around at a concert: you will see people not listening to a piece of music but reading about it—about its meaning, its style, its relation "to the history of its time . . . to some tendency." Talk to people who have heard a piece of music: you will find that what they listened for and got from it is its relation to period and tendencies. Read an announcement of a summer music institute: you will discover that it is going to be concerned with music in relation to periods and tendencies: "The music of the nineteenth century was dominated by the virtuoso and the mass orchestra. Seen as an expression of its time the worship of the virtuoso on the concert stage was a part of the hero-worship

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of this age. The development of the mass orchestra coincided with the process of industrialization and mass production. . . . The amazing return of contemporary music and musical practice to polyphony and to the smaller ensembles of chamber music may be understood as a reflection of the awareness of the fundamental task that confronts our generation: the reconciliation between individual and society."

And that brings me to the fourth thing to say. The musicologists have done the public a disservice not only by distracting its mind from the music, but by distracting it with material as bad as what I have just quoted, or what I quoted from Einstein's *Mozart* recently, or what I quoted from Leichtentritt's *Music, History, and Ideas* a few years ago: "There seems to have been something fateful in the circumstance that Mozart died in 1791 just as the French Revolution reached the height of its frenzy. Haydn, robust and masculine, could still profit from the tremendous changes that were brought about by the French Revolution. Mozart, more delicate, extremely sensitive, with an almost feminine susceptibility, was so thoroughly a child of the dying rococo age that the rude shocks of the French Revolution were a fatal blow to him."

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Some of the musicologists' books have been bad; others—like Dr. Curt Sachs's *World History of the Dance*⁵⁰ and *History of Musical Instruments*⁴⁹—have been remote from the general public's interest (but anyone who does happen to be interested in the music of India should look up an article by Wasantha Wana Singh in the November 1941 issue of *Listen*, in which there is a paragraph on Dr. Sachs's errors on the subject).

On the other hand Dorian's *History of Music in Performance*¹⁴ deals with a problem which every musician and music-lover is concerned with constantly—the problem of the correct realization of a piece of music in living sound from the written

directions of the composer's score. These directions derive their meaning from the style of performance of the composer's period; we are not sure of their precise meaning even in the scores of the past one hundred and fifty years which write out every sound that is to be produced and prescribe in increasing detail the manner of its production; and our uncertainty increases as we go back in time to scores which employ forms of shorthand that no longer have any meaning for us. In order, then, to produce today the sound of an eighteenth-century keyboard work in its own day it has been necessary to find out what its notation of ornaments and indications of tempo meant to an eighteenth-century performer, what they referred to in the style of performance he was familiar with, what sounds they told him to produce and how they told him to produce them. This is one of the things which the musicologists are busy with; one of those which they point to as evidence of the value of their science; one, certainly, which has the possibility of usefulness to the general public that some of their other activities have not.

But this possibility is only partly realized in Dorian's book. There are things in it like Frescobaldi's preface to the published edition of his *Toccatas for organ* that are illuminating; but there are even more things like the hullabaloo of historical information about the sarabande or the chaconne or the minuet, which we are told will establish the correct manner of their performance, but after which I knew no more about their performance than I had known before. Nor could I get any precise notions from the discussion of ornaments; and though a friend claimed to have got something from it by working hard over it, I think he really got it from his additional reading of Dolmetsch.^{13a}

However I did get amusement from a couple of musico-political details in this work of pure scholarship: a photograph—the only one of its kind in the book—of Ormandy with Toscanini, intended to reinforce the impression Ormandy attempts to create in his foreword with things like his reference to "Toscanini and those of us who subscribe to the principles of interpretative loyalty" (that is, fidelity to the written score).

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Of the books the musicologists have given us, only one that is of interest and value to the general public is first-rate: the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*,² by Dr. Willi Apel, with a few articles by other scholars. It is concerned only with music, not with musicians; and the articles I have dipped into here and there I have found to be excellent. One reader I know was irritated by the bibliographies that referred him to obscure and inaccessible European periodicals, most of them German. And I encountered one extremely bad article—the one on music criticism by Dr. Hugo Leichtentritt.

It is not so much its ideas about the task of criticism and what this requires in the critic that I am concerned with. For I should expect a German pedant and the author of *Music, History, and Ideas* to think that Calvocoressi's schematization of criticism, which distinguishes in it the critic's "predispositions," his "direct data," and his "indirect data," offers a practical method of operation for the critic, whose task is consciously "to separate these considerations and . . . to avoid undue prevalence of the personal 'predisposition' over the factual 'data,'" and who in this way can "advance music criticism from the level of a hit-or-miss reaction of individuals to the rank of a real science."

What I find shocking is the sloppy, shoddy job of scholarship that is evident in the mere factual material of the article. The first section postpones journalistic criticism of performances to deal with criticism of music in books. But mention of Schumann's discussions of music sends Leichtentritt off on the tangent of other composers who were critics—among them Berlioz. Having mentioned him here, Leichtentritt does not mention him where he belongs—in the second section on musical journalism, where, ignoring the brilliant writing Berlioz did in the *Journal des Débats* from 1835 to 1863, Leichtentritt says: "Eduard Hanslick, who wrote from 1864 for the *Neue Freie Press* (Vienna), may justly be called the father of musical journalism, *if only for the reason* [italics mine—B. H. H.] that, in his one-sided attitude against Wagner and for Brahms, he introduced into music criticism an element of personal aggressiveness and preju-

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dice which, unfortunately, was imitated by a number of later critics."

Paralleling Leichtentritt's omission of Berlioz is his omission of the most brilliant of German musical journalists, the poet Heine. And when he deals with England he mentions Ernest Newman, because Newman happens to be "best known internationally," but not Bernard Shaw, one of the greatest of all music critics, whom it would have taken some effort to know about, and not even the most distinguished English critic of recent years, W. J. Turner. As for the United States, it has had "a galaxy of eminent critics who have done honor to the profession"; and first comes a list of the older generation, concerning which I will express my doubt that the judgment that Krehbiel did honor to his profession was based on any investigation into what that American Hanslick wrote. And then a list of those who "at present" are "with others . . . the best known and most esteemed critics": Downes, Oscar Thompson, Virgil Thomson, Chotzinoff, Perkins, and Leonard Liebbling—a list which includes one man who gave up his job four years ago, and fails to distinguish the men who are worthy of esteem from those who are not.

"But then," a friend remarked, "consider the reviews the book would have got if it had had a *good* article on criticism."

July 7, 1945

There was a point at which I stopped going to hear pianists play the piano, or violinists the violin, and went only to hear them play music. Which is to say that I stopped going to the recitals of most of the celebrated instrumentalists who have impressed a "great American public" not equipped to distinguish between mastery of an instrument and insight into music or to understand any such distinction; and I attended the recitals of the few who concerned themselves with the music I was interested in and who performed it with understanding—people like

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Schnabel, Giesecking, Aitken, Szigeti, Milstein, Feuermann, Landowska.

One of the instrumentalists I stopped going to hear was Horowitz, whose prodigious mastery of the piano was not enough to keep me from being bored beyond endurance by the musical limitations that were evident in the program and performances of the last recital I attended years ago—since which time I have heard him only when he has filled in the piano parts in performances of concertos by Toscanini, and most recently at the Russian Consulate première of Prokofiev's latest sonata, whose motor rhythms and ostinato crescendos called for precisely the overpowering virtuosity Horowitz was able to bring to bear on them. In the matter of the music he plays, Horowitz told an interviewer a few years ago that he had found himself unable to understand the late sonatas of Beethoven and therefore did not play them. I admired him for his unusual honesty and humility; but I had no interest in the programs of the music that he did understand—programs in which the high point was an opening group of, say, a few Scarlatti sonatas and a bit of early Beethoven; after which there was a descent to the cheapest kind of display pieces. Nor did I care to hear him play even the few consequential works of those programs; for what does not call for technical brilliance Horowitz plays with sentimental and arch distentions and inflections of phrase.

The other piano virtuoso who packs them in nowadays, Artur Schnabel, I have found more interesting and enjoyable to listen to—on some occasions. I do not agree that the traditional mannered style of playing Chopin is the right style; but Schnabel's verve and grace make his recorded performances of Chopin's E minor Concerto, the Polonaises, the Mazurkas in that style superb. The trouble begins when he plays Beethoven's Sonata Opus 81a (*Les Adieux*), and it comes out with sensitive, Chopinesque contours and inflections. Or—as I discovered recently when I listened to the recording after a long interval—when he plays Mozart's Concerto K.488, and its melodies come

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out sentimentalized by the same mannered style, while passage-work is something to speed up brilliantly.

*July 14, August 11, 1945;
July 20, 1946*

The attitude I have been objecting to—the preoccupation not with the piece of music but with ideas about its style, period, and tendency—turns up in unexpected places. It isn't only the New Friends of Music audience that, instead of listening to a quartet of Haydn or Mozart, reads in its program-notes a history of chamber music by Dr. Curt Sachs, or a discussion of the style and tendency of the particular quartet (which is difficult to correlate with the details it refers to even when it has such real connection with the work). A museum which finds it possible to hang its pictures and simply let people look at them cannot do the same thing with music: it must have a musicologist to construct programs and write program-notes that will teach the audience about styles and developments (with results that I will soon get around to describing). And—most absurd of all—a record company which decides to reissue some outstanding recorded performances of jazz cannot offer them as something to be listened to and enjoyed; it must offer them as something to teach styles and developments, with the help of booklets containing the fantastic inventions, the confusions and obscurities, and the sheer illiteracies of the "authorities" in this field.

The latest instance of this is six albums of recordings of what Victor calls hot jazz that it has reissued for educational purposes. Jazz, says the Victor announcement, "has mainly been considered as pleasant listening, but of little serious value for the music student"; but "before hot jazz can be incorporated into serious American music, each giving to the other, there must come about a better understanding of jazz" by musicians and listeners; and it is to achieve this that Victor has reissued the performances with booklets by Charles Edward Smith. This

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"well-known jazz authority" seems to have refrained tactfully from pointing out to Victor that hot jazz is nothing that can or will be incorporated into serious American music, or that not all of the performances reissued by Victor are hot jazz. And his notes on the performances go through the verbal motions of describing styles and developments which they actually don't describe at all.

There is another attitude of the musicologists that turns up in jazz. They have a habit of establishing the original form of an art as the only legitimate form, of which the inevitable modifications and developments into new forms are sternly condemned as degenerations from the primitive *typus*. In the same way the original New Orleans style—produced by "cornet lead, and clarinet and trombone countermovements, over a two-beat rhythm section," as one reader described it to me—has been set up as the only authentic form of jazz, with much the same result: any departure from New Orleans style is not jazz, and all the different departures are equally terrible. The reader I have mentioned went on to say that "all other methods wander out into the damndest complications and methods having nothing but historical connection (if that) with the original jazz style." Thus the early Louis Armstrong Hot Five performances with "Armstrong's soloing," which were a "first break away from the sometimes less individually brilliant but always more collectively alive New Orleans style," were also a first step toward present-day "individual exhibitionism, powerhouse arrangements for 27 trumpets and 89 saxophones, and Duke Ellington," and toward the intervening performances of the Chicagoans that my correspondent disliked. So that while the early Hot Five with Dodds and Ory played jazz, even the slightly later Armstrong-Hines-Robinson combination only played "*like* jazz."

But another reader with a more rigorously systematizing mind contended that the term "jazz" was correctly applicable only to the New Orleans type of ensemble performance to which it had been applied originally; and that performances

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which emphasized solos rather than ensemble—even performances as good as those of the Armstrong Hot Five, the Dodds Black Bottom Stompers, the Chicago “jazz imitators like Beiderbecke, Teschmacher, and Spanier”—were not “jazz in the strict sense.” And he too pointed out that they were the first step toward the later Armstrongs and the performances redeemed only by a solo by Buck Clayton or Bix; and that “from there it is only another short step to Glenn Miller and Tin Pan Alley.”

This of course is all nonsense. Jazz could not stop with the New Orleans style; and among the departures and developments we have to distinguish those, like the Chicago style, that are jazz, from those, like the “powerhouse arrangements,” that are not. Moreover we have to recognize value in whatever style it appears—to recognize that a particular Chicago performance happens to be better than a particular New Orleans. And I disapprove of the “only-a-step” argument. If the Dodds *Wild Man Blues* or the Chicagoans’ *Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble* is good, it does not become less good because something bad has followed from it: only the bad thing that followed is bad; and the argument leaves out of consideration the good things that have followed. My reader’s letters have made me feel more strongly about the preoccupation with developments and tendencies: it is the individual work of art that is important and that is good or bad, not by its relation to developments and tendencies, but by its own particular qualities as a work of art.

My idea of what is jazz and what is not I described in an answer to a further letter from my systematizing correspondent, in which he argued that to insist that the music produced by the Armstrong Hot Five is the same as the obviously different music produced by the later Armstrong Savoy Ballroom Five “leads to hopeless confusion,” and therefore he did not see “what is gained by insisting that both must be called jazz.” I wrote: “I have considered jazz to be the performances of small groups of musicians—performances spontaneously, freely creative in the traditional language and style described by Wilder Hobson in *American Jazz Music*, and exhibiting the

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integration, the immediacy of relation of ensemble performance in both the ensemble and the solo passages. Against these I have set the well-oiled performances of written-out arrangements by large bands. And I have taken into account in-between types like the various Ellingtons, ranging from the early ones nearest jazz, in which the soloists operate with considerable freedom, to the later ones that are nearly all arranged gilt-and-plush. But the New Orleans performances, the Armstrong Hot Fives and Hot Sevens and Savoy Ballroom Fives, the Chicago performances—these I have regarded as different ways of doing what I have described as jazz. . . . The same thing is gained by calling a Hot Five and a Savoy Ballroom Five both jazz as is gained by calling a work of Mozart and a work of Beethoven both symphony; and confusion is created by giving them two names.”

I should add that from some of the material sent by my systematizing correspondent I discovered that it wasn't only the attitudes of the musicologists that were turning up in jazz, but the musicologists themselves who had moved in on jazz, finding in it, as usual, not something to enjoy but an additional material for their categorizing and system-grinding. This was something I had not realized when I had encountered in the *Herald Tribune* an article on *Jazz Purism* by Rudi Blesh, which used the same method of falsifying schematization as did the monstrosity on chamber music in the nineteenth century that Professor Paul Henry Lang contributed to a New Friends of Music booklet.

August 4, 1945

Gershwin's career as a serious composer was based on fallacious reasoning—as fallacious as the reasoning would have been that because Johann Strauss wrote delightful *Wienerwalzer* he was the one to write the Viennese symphony and opera, and this on the ground that only the Viennese waltz was the proper substance for the truly Viennese symphony and opera, which was to say that because the Viennese waltz expressed Viennese

feeling on the emotional level of a waltz it must be used as the substance of music which expressed Viennese feeling on the level of the symphony and opera. If Strauss had acted in accordance with such reasoning he would have produced the same delightful waltzes arranged in the formal patterns of serious music; and that was the result in Gershwin's case.

His serious works are filled with characteristic and superb Gershwin show music, pieced together in the required formal patterns with derivative and inconsequential connective material in the idiom of serious music—show music which communicates, in these contexts and in Carnegie Hall, exactly what it would have communicated in a musical show and in the Alvin Theater. That is true of the Rhapsodies, the Piano Concerto, and *Porgy and Bess*, in which there is a further fallacy to take note of. A couple of years ago Duke Ellington presented in Carnegie Hall his *Black, Brown, and Beige*—described as “a tone parallel to the history of the Negro in America,” and based on the idea that since the American Negro had produced jazz, jazz was the medium in which to express in musical terms everything that had happened to him from his arrival here in slavery down to his participation in the present war. If that was absurd, what is one to say of Gershwin's expressing Negro life in Broadway show tunes and even more glaringly incongruous material in styles borrowed from opera—for example, the recitative in which Catfish Row Negroes sing such facts as that they will have to get up at five o'clock the next morning. Only in *An American in Paris* does Gershwin succeed in inventing imaginative non-show-music material—such as the opening theme—that is on the level of the show music; also he achieves his most successful integration of material in a continuous progression; and I find this to be the best of his ambitious works.

August 11, 1945

A reader, beginning with approval of my attack on the pre-occupation with developments and tendencies, has written to

point out that a composer's music does have a relation to other music, and to ask whether complete understanding of his music does not therefore require knowledge of that relation. This is an instance of how, beginning with truth, one may end up with error. It is true that the pictorial elements which appear on a Cézanne canvas have relations to the work of other painters, to their ideas, to general intellectual currents, to social conditions; it is not true—though the musicologists contend it is—that one must know these relations in order to understand the Cézanne painting. That understanding consists in experiencing the effect, the impact, of the pictorial elements as they are placed and related on the canvas, and of nothing else; the related things outside the canvas enter into this experience only insofar as they are “digested” in what is on the canvas—to borrow a term from Tovey, who remarks that “what the finished [work of art] cannot digest must be ignored or regarded outside it.” To know the relations of the work of art to the things outside it is to understand not the work of art but certain facts in the history of art and general culture. And this distinction is abundantly illustrated by the musicologists who, as I have pointed out, reveal knowledge of everything about a piece of music, but no insight into the piece itself as an artistic communication; and on the other hand by the people who do have this insight, without any knowledge about the music. But the public's mind has been so poisoned that a reader who wrote me recently about his “pleasure and little insight into great works of genius” found it necessary to confess that he wrote as “a mere listener” who had gained this insight only “by ear.” That is why I keep hammering away on the point.

Merely to listen, and in this way to gain pleasurable insight into Mozart's music—that is considered so inadequate as to require apology. For complete understanding one must read something like the review ⁶ of Einstein's *Mozart in Kenyon Review*—a full-dress musicological demonstration that Mozart as a composer was “one of the most prominent exponents of the

revolutionary second half of the eighteenth century." This is achieved by the following steps: (1) the period was that of the revolt of the middle class; (2) the object of the revolt was not only equality but even superiority; (3) "the middle class tried to accomplish this by sublimation of human nature . . . through the cultivation of the three functions of man: intellect (it was the period of Enlightenment), will (it was the period of the English autonomic moral philosophy, and of the moralization of the arts and literature), and feeling (it was the period of sentimentality)"; (4) Mozart was sentimental—by the evidence of a description in a letter of his weepy behavior under the influence of homesickness; (5) "no art, of course, is more appropriate to the expression of sentimental feelings than music"; (6) "and no composer of this period has set greater value on *Expressivität* than Mozart"—by the evidence of specified letters; (7) "Mozart's enormous expressivity was his greatest contribution to the fundamental change of the theretofore aristocratic society to a bourgeois society"; (8) therefore he was a revolutionary.

Note the method: the line of reasoning about sentimentality; the unobtrusive shift, in the sixth step, from sentimentality to expressiveness, quite as though they were the interchangeable equivalents they are not; so that, in the next step, the argument may embrace Mozart's music, which is intensely expressive but not sentimental. What I think of the method, the purpose, the complete, detailed piece of writing, I have not been able to find polite language for.

August 18, 1945

Even if the new Columbia recording of Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No. 4 were good it would be unnecessary. I am reminded of Shaw's comment on a London performance of *Samson et Dalila* in 1893. "Who wants to hear *Samson et Dalila*? I re-

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spectfully suggest, Nobody." In Paris, he continued, the Opera was a national institution which had to produce an opera by an illustrious French composer—just as the English festivals had to produce specially composed oratorios by English composers. And he was "strongly of the opinion that each nation should bear its own burden in this department of life. We do not ask the Parisians to share the weight of [Parry's] *Job* with us; then let them not foist on to us the load of *Samson*." I respectfully suggest that this wisdom be applied to Russia and the United States: we would still have to listen to Roy Harris, but not to both Harris and Shostakovitch.

This is by no means the only passage in Shaw's criticism of fifty years ago, which I reread recently, that remains enlightening and profitable today. During the intermission of a piano recital, for example, I read a paragraph about Giulia Ravogli's singing of an excerpt from Vaccai's *Giuletta e Romeo* which ended with the observation that the music was "for an age, but most emphatically not for all time." And this turned out to be the correct comment on Copland's Piano Variations, which was performed after the intermission.

And some time ago, writing about a bad recording, I quoted these remarks of a shrewd editor I know: "A record company thinks it's smart to sell a recording like that if people are willing to buy it; but it's stupid. Thousands of people are led to buy the recording because it's Beethoven—the *Moonlight* Sonata—Serkin—Columbia, which means that it's good music; they hear something that sounds terrible and that they don't enjoy; and so thousands of people now have the idea that good music sounds terrible and is not for them, and enormous damage has been done to the cause of good music and to the record business." This was the very point made by Shaw in a review of a shoddy East End production of a West End opera: "When the [orchestra's] feeble and mis-tuned scraping got very bad . . . doubtless the packed pittites said reverently, 'This is classical music. This is above our heads, this is.'"

August 25, 1945

Increasing age has not affected Toscanini's powers as conductor and musician. Not only did last year's performances with the N.B.C. Symphony have the same unique qualities of sharpness of contour, exquisite inflection of phrase, transparency of texture, and organic coherence, but some of them, like the one of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, showed further development and reached new heights of effectiveness and power. And at the New York Philharmonic Pension Fund concert—at which he chose to repeat the program of his very first concert with the orchestra in 1926 and his last Thursday-Friday pair in 1936—it was, miraculously, as though one were sitting in Carnegie Hall in January, 1926, or April, 1936, and hearing what one had heard then, but with the wonderful qualities of the performances even more wonderful than they had been. The mercurial darting about of Haydn's mind in the finale of the *Clock* Symphony was pointed up by even greater sharpness of inflection; the organic proportions of the *Siegfried's Death* music from *Götterdämmerung* were molded in a way that achieved an even more shattering climax.

Also one heard again the great New York Philharmonic Orchestra of 1936, miraculously brought to life for this one concert. And in this way Toscanini once more proved Virgil Thomson's statements about the Philharmonic to be the fantastic nonsense they have been.

It was Thomson's contention, in 1941, that the Philharmonic musicians had been "so thoroughly guest-conducted for twenty years now that they have become temperamental, erratic"; and the "twenty years now" made it clear that he did not mean only what had happened in 1940-41, when Barbirolli, after three seasons as full-time permanent conductor, had shared the season with Bruno Walter, Mitropoulos, and Damrosch, or what was going to happen in 1941-42, when the season would be shared by Barbirolli, Stokowski, Walter, Rodzinski, Mitropoulos, Fritz Busch, Koussevitzky, Damrosch, and Goossens. No, Thomson

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meant the years when the orchestra had been conducted for long periods of the season by Mengelberg and Furtwängler, then by Mengelberg and Toscanini; even the few years when it had been conducted for twenty weeks of the season by Toscanini. And his contention was that not even Toscanini, conducting the orchestra for ten years, anywhere from ten to twenty weeks each year, had been able to mold it into an instrument expressive of himself, to impose on it a discipline, a style, an individuality which it would retain, as did Stokowski's Philadelphia or Koussevitzky's Boston Symphony, when it played under other conductors. Only in the last two years, Thomson has maintained recently, has this been achieved at last by Rodzinski.

Now Toscanini's recordings with the New York Philharmonic give evidence of his having made it an instrument expressive of himself; for they reproduce the characteristic and unique contours, inflections, and textures that are to be heard in any performance of his with any orchestra. But with no orchestra that he has conducted since 1936—not even with the greatest of them, the Philadelphia—has he produced the Toscanini style raised to the point of sheer incandescence that one hears in his recorded Philharmonic performances of the Overtures to *Semiramide* and *L'Italiana in Algeri*. That is because his years with the Philharmonic created a hand-in-glove relation between them that he has not been able to create to the same degree with any orchestra since—the kind of relation that existed between Stokowski and the Philadelphia and Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony. The Philharmonic was sensitized to Toscanini's direction in exactly the phenomenal way the Philadelphia was to Stokowski's, the Boston Symphony to Koussevitzky's; and under this direction it had a discipline, a style, a sound as individual as those of the Philadelphia under Stokowski, the Boston Symphony under Koussevitzky. True, whenever Toscanini was away the Philharmonic lost its identity in a way that the Philadelphia did not; but that was because in Stokowski's absence the Philadelphia played with a sense of responsibility to its greatness, whereas one could see as well as hear the Philhar-

monic sit back and take things easy (and if it merely took things easy it was treating the conductor well).

The relation between Toscanini and the Philharmonic was demonstrated in breath-taking fashion in the first minutes of the first rehearsal of the Beethoven Festival in 1942, when he stepped on the podium and with no preliminaries simply began to conduct the orchestra for the first time after six years, and the orchestra at once began to play as though the interval had been only one day—to produce the razor-edge attacks, the radiant sonorities, the transparent textures of balanced woodwinds or strings that his movements had elicited from it in 1936. But even more impressive was the demonstration at the rehearsal of the *Götterdämmerung* music this year. In 1942 he had returned to an orchestra only slightly changed in personnel; in 1945 he was conducting an orchestra in which Rodzinski had made a considerable number of replacements, and which had had two years of drilling by Rodzinski that, according to Thomson, had given it a definite and unchangeable style and individuality; yet consider what happened. Having first devoted a few minutes to working out the cross-rhythm at the climax, and the balance of the wind instruments in the opening chords, Toscanini then simply led the orchestra through the piece, and produced with it every sound and contour of the performance of 1936—quite as though there had been no interval of years, no changes in personnel, no other conductors.

It was his way of saying, as he had said in 1942: "This is *my* orchestra."

September 8, 1945

A reader has written me from Germany an interesting comment on the paragraph from Einstein's *Mozart* that I quoted last May. The paragraph was about Mozart's relation to the intellectual currents of his time, and contained the statement that Mozart probably would have had no use for Rousseau, "whose call 'Back to Nature' would have meant very little to

him. Mozart was on the side of Voltaire, in spite of the ill-tempered words he pronounced upon the sage of Ferney as an obituary." This leads my correspondent to observe: "I had just finished reading a collection of Mozart letters . . . [which] are astounding, aren't they? And after reading them Einstein's passage was just nonsense. The compulsion some people are under to try to fit literary or musical figures into *our* idea of their time seems so wasteful. These writers want their idols to be on what we now think was the right side of their century. Thus, since Einstein is on the side of Voltaire (good for Voltaire) it is necessary that Mozart be, too. And so the vicious letter he wrote on Voltaire's death becomes 'ill-tempered'—which is absurd. He was *not* on Voltaire's side; he hated Voltaire; his letter on Voltaire's death is really nasty. And why can't the man be given credit for some unpleasant qualities, or for some errors of judgment (if indeed they are errors of judgment)?"

Also, my recent analysis of the review of Einstein's book in the summer issue of *Kenyon Review* has brought this illuminating comment from another reader: "I should say that Mozart's music is rich in sentiment, but not sentimental as Beethoven occasionally is in the slow movements of his weaker works. Indeed I should say that Mozart's very expressiveness, his capacity to arouse the substantive feelings and passions of joy, sorrow, longing, gaiety, precludes the possibility of his being sentimental. Sentimentality is precisely the pose of feeling, the simulation or suggestion of it rather than the thing itself. Sometimes, in Beethoven, one feels that he is trying to create a mood which has no actual occasion or objective correlative (to use T. S. Eliot's phrase) in the music itself. The mood is suggested or 'called to mind' but not embodied. In Mozart one *can't help* being gay or exultant or whatever the music is at the time. In Brahms's serenades one feels that one 'ought' to be gay; in the finale of Mozart's E flat Symphony one *is* gay, deliriously so. That is why the Brahms is so terribly dull in the end, even though the tunes are often quite charming in themselves."

From the very beginning there have been readers of this column who have found it impossible to regard my dislike of much of Brahms's music as a product of rational judgment of experience; and the accusations of insufficient knowledge of the music and of prejudice against it have continued in the face of my statements to the contrary. I have pointed out that since I have expressed my love for certain works of Brahms my dislike of others cannot represent a prejudice against him; I have also pointed out that I acquired an exhaustive knowledge of his music during the dozen or more years when it was for me, every note of it, the greatest of all—until I began to be aware of something in some of the works that made me dislike them. What I began to be aware of was the pose of feeling that my correspondent speaks of which is to be heard in the ranting of the first movement of the First Symphony, the treading sentimentality of the second movement, the archness of the third—all of which can be heard also in other of Brahms's pretentious large-scale works. And not only pose of feeling, but pose of the entire process of artistic creation—of feeling making itself articulate through the substance, procedures, forms of an artistic medium. The very first work that I disliked was the Sonata Opus 99 for cello and piano: here for the first time I became aware of a mere filling out of formal pattern by arbitrary manipulation of synthetic substance—of a form of expression without real expression. And in time I came to dislike the other works of Brahms in which pumped-up attitudes are communicated through synthetically contrived large structures—as against music which communicates something genuinely felt that has dictated the substance and its manipulation into a form.

Now that I think of it, that pose of feeling and of artistic expression of feeling is one of the things I have heard and disliked in the music of Shostakovitch, of Villa-Lobos, of Roy Harris, of William Schuman, and of others like them.

After all this had been written Einstein's book came up once more. This column's favorite correspondent, returned from war,

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listened with me to Mozart's String Quintet K.515; and when we were talking about the things that were so astounding in the minuet movement—the somber strangeness of the Minuet and first part of the Trio, the violent intensities of its middle part—I showed him what Einstein had found important about it: “The following Minuet is more of a *tempo di minuetto*, with a Trio in the subdominant, which itself grows into complete song-form.” Later we listened to the last few minutes of *The Marriage of Figaro*, leading up to and ending with the *Contessa, perdono* passage; and when I lifted the pickup off the record after the solemn octaves that gently ease us from the superearthly exaltation of that passage down to this earth again, he sat silent for a long time; then, beginning to laugh, he said: “Let’s see what Einstein has to say about it.” So we looked, and found that Einstein had nothing to say about it. And looking further we found that he did have things like this to say: “It has been observed with truth that in Susanna there is a bit of Colombina left, in Figaro of Arlecchino; that Don Bartolo and Marcellina are pure *buffo* figures. But the Countess? The Count? Cherubino? The tiny roles of Barbarina and her father, the gardener Antonio? Basilio the schemer? It took courage to see the *opera buffa* possibilities in this work and to realize them—courage that Mozart and da Ponte can have gathered only from pieces like those of Bertati and Casti.” At which point we shut the book with a bang—for good.*

September 15, 1945

Shaw did no concert-reviewing after his resignation from the *World* in 1894; but the death of Verdi in 1901 elicited from him the superb article on Verdi's work, and an atrocious performance of *Il Trovatore* in 1917 provoked the equally fine

* [1948] I would say now that Einstein is the only one of the musicologists who shows a love of music, but that all he can find to say about the music he loves is fatuous nonsense.

article on that opera, that are included in the volume of his music criticism⁵² published by Dodd, Mead in this country. In the general article, having refuted the contention that Verdi had been influenced by Wagner, he proceeded, as he said, to "take Verdi on his own ground. Verdi's genius, like Victor Hugo's, was hyperbolic and grandiose: he expressed all the common passions with an impetuosity and intensity which produced an effect of sublimity." And *Il Trovatore* he pronounced "unique even among the works of its own composer and its own country. It has tragic power, poignant melancholy, impetuous vigor, and a sweet and intense pathos that never loses its dignity."

And now imagine this music sung by a singer about whom Shaw wrote in 1894: "Whoever has not seen Miss Eames as Charlotte has not realized the full force of Thackeray's picture of the young lady who, when she saw the remains of her lover

Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person,
Went on cutting bread-and-butter.

I never saw such a well-conducted person as Miss Eames. She casts her propriety like a Sunday frock over the whole stage." That combination of music and singer was what I heard recently from an old record on which Eames sang the impassioned *Mira d'acerbe lagrime* duet in her cool lady-like fashion with de Gogorza; and it was sheer farce which reduced the music to nonsense. Fortunately another record in the pile enabled me to hear the music restored to impressive sense by Gadske and Amato, singing with superb style as well as the beautiful voices they had in their prime. And these two records illustrate an important point, which I would like to state before I go on to speak of some of the other records in the pile—namely, that the talk about the Golden Age of Singing has been indiscriminating. The passage about Eames is one of many in Shaw in which he discusses the now leg-

endary figures who for him were living day-to-day Covent Garden realities; and if he confirms what we have heard about the powers of Calvé he also convinces us that her Carmen was horrible, and reveals that Jean de Reszke shirked his performances except when he had the competition of a Van Dyck to fear, that Edouard de Reszke bawled his head off, that Tamagno did the same, and other things of the sort.

In this connection I might speak of two of the records of the famous soprano Lilli Lehmann that I had heard about for years, and that I was at last able to hear recently. In certain respects Lehmann's performances—of *Casta diva* from *Norma* and *Abscheulicher!* from *Fidelio*—lived up to what had been said about them: she had recorded them around 1907, when she was sixty or more, and the beauty and steadiness of the voice in the long opening phrases of *Casta diva*, its security in the florid passages, were remarkable; and she sang, moreover, with the style of a great artistic personage. On the other hand it was astonishing to hear what liberties in tempo and phrasing—which today would be considered excessive, and even in bad musical taste—were possible within the limits of good musicianship in 1907. In *Casta diva*, for example, after the first two beautifully inflected phrases, Lehmann suddenly rushed up to the climactic high point of the passage, stopped to take breath, and then descended very slowly.

But whatever the liberties that prevailing standards allowed, Hempel had her own unerring feeling for phrase that produced musical as well as vocal perfection. Among the great treasures in the pile of old records that I mentioned before were several of her performances; and it was not only the effortless agility and accuracy but the musical style of the florid passages that made *Vien, diletto* from Bellini's *I Puritani* breathtaking. Indeed what moved us all to tears was rather her exquisite inflection of the simple opening statement of *Ah, vous dirai-je, maman*, and her wonderful extended phrasing of *Dite alla giovine* from *La Traviata*, which she sang with Amato.

November 17, 1945

It was saddening to hear the somewhat frayed condition of Maggie Teyte's voice during most of her first Telephone Hour broadcast; and astonishing to hear the lovely voice of the recordings suddenly reappear at the end of the broadcast in *Oft in the Stilly Night*. So at her first New York recital: in the opening group by Méhul, Monsigny, Mozart, and Gluck, the voice was painfully worn throughout its range; then she left the stage and returned immediately to sing the *Letter* from Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* as though with a different voice—one with texture, color, warmth. I thought at first that the difference was due to the low range and declamatory style of this piece and the Debussy songs that followed it; but the improvement continued in the songs of Duparc and Fauré: it was not a young voice, but an old one that preserved an extraordinary amount of its earlier beauty and flexibility, and revealed its age only in an occasional toneless or metallic high note.

What, then, was the explanation? The mere fact of walking off the stage and back? "Yes, precisely that," answered someone who knew from experience. "It isn't until you walk off the stage the first time at a concert that the awful tension of walking on the first time is relaxed; then you are at ease for the rest of the concert." As he spoke I recalled occasions when I had heard Szigeti scrape and scratch his way through the several movements of an opening sonata, then leave the stage and return immediately to play with serenity of style and beauty of tone. And I recalled also some of Caruso's testimony on the subject in letters to his wife.¹⁰

Those letters are extremely moving human documents and fascinating revelations of the behind-the-façade operations of a musician's career. The torment of walking on the stage for a first group is bad enough for a pianist or violinist; but from Caruso we learn that it is even worse for a singer, since the instrument of his performances is so much more immediately affected by his physical and nervous condition, and so much less

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subject to his control. One of Caruso's most extraordinary letters tells us how a performance of *Marta* in Mexico City began:

I went to the theater in a very bad conditions. There I tried my voice and I was surprised of the lightness. Then I was a little quite with my nervs but the headache were there in bak of my head. The performance begannd and from my dressing room I heard how the first scene goes. Nobody knowed the part. . . . I heard that the soprano and the mezzo makes lots of fault and that makes me nervos because I tought at my duets, terzetti e quartetti. The second scene, the market, begannd and the corus went out of kee and the public show his malcontento in wissly terribly. I went out with the baritono and he begannd with a very wrotten voice . . . I beginning my larghetto and with my surprise my voice were without brillancy but my experience let the public applaude at the end of my solo very much. . . . But I was not satisfied . . .

And how it ended:

There comes the third act were is the romance. Ah, dearie, I dont know where I found such a voice! I never sing that aria so beautifully and there were a demonstration delirante. . . . After comes the concertato where I have the famous frase, *Marta a te perdonne Iddio*. I sung such frase with many feelings and intensity, that everybody public and artists cry . . . The emotions were so great in everybody that was explenid as I never sung in my life like that and I communicated to the public all my feeling with a voice over uman . . .

That is something to be considered by the New York critic who once slipped into the seat behind me for the second of an opening group of four Schubert Impromptus at a Schnabel recital, wrote busily during the third, and was gone by the fourth. And by other critics for whom this is standard practice. (But they are fairness itself in comparison with the critic who, kept at home by grippe, wrote a review of a Szigeti recital on the basis of his wife's report on the opening sonata.)

To get back to Maggie Teyte: She returned to sing the *Letter* from *Pelléas* not only with a different voice but with a communicative power that she had not achieved in the preceding songs with the help of a lot of coy pantomimic showmanship. In the songs that followed, which she did seriously and with superb art, there was a considerable amount of dramatic pointing up in the phrasing, which threw the vocal line out of relation with the delicately sensitive piano contexts provided by George Reeves.

This dramatic pointing up produced a strange performance of *Voi che sapete* from *The Marriage of Figaro* at the first Telephone Hour broadcast. The singing was very jerky and staccato, possibly with the idea of conveying the boyish characteristics of Cherubino. If that was the idea, I would say that what Mozart intended to convey about Cherubino is conveyed in the music sung in the normal flowing style in which he undoubtedly intended it to be sung.

December 1, 1945

Tovey's *Beethoven*⁵⁹ is an uncompleted first draft, of which he revised only a few pages. "There is," says the editor, "only internal evidence that the unfinished chapter was the last in the plan"; but that internal evidence is the amount of ground the book has covered before it breaks off. The ground is strictly musical: "While admitting that 'the style is the man,'" Tovey writes, "I refuse to involve the reader in vulgar entanglements between the art and the artist's private or official life"; also, "the task of dealing with the music as music is more than enough for me; and, even now that an intelligent interest in music is more widely distributed than the music-lovers of last century could ever have dreamt of as possible, there is crying need for a clearer understanding of the nature of music itself . . . the humble and professional facts of rhythm, melody, counterpoint, harmony, and tonality." The book, then, is a statement of Tovey's ideas about these elements as they are used in musical

forms, illustrated chiefly by examples of Beethoven's practice, but with side-references to the practices of other composers.

"My professional terminology," he observes, "is rigorously confined to generalizations from the behavior of musical compositions." So are his ideas; and to be understood they must be re-derived by the reader from his own first-hand experience of that behavior. He must, that is, turn to each passage of music that Tovey mentions to discover in it the meaning of what Tovey says about it. That makes the reading of the book a long process (I have been able only to glance through it), and really possible only for someone who can do the reading of music it requires. It is, then, a book for the person with at least the amount of musical education this presumes; and even a musically educated person will have difficulty with some of the ideas, or with Tovey's statement of them. A rereading of his *Integrity of Music*,⁶² *Musical Textures*,⁶² and a couple of other lectures, last summer, sharpened into conviction what had been a vague impression—that Tovey's epigrammatic style is one of his strengths when it succeeds but a weakness when it fails: in the one case the compression brings the elements of the idea into wonderfully illuminated relations; in the other it presents them with their relations obscured.

There is a great deal of this obscurity when Tovey is making general observations; very little of it when he is pointing out the detailed behavior of a musical composition. And it was while I happened to be rereading his marvelous expositions of Haydn's symphonies, in *Essays in Musical Analysis*, that I received the program-notes for the Boston Symphony's first New York concerts, with an article by Ernest Newman in which I discovered that he too has "long wanted to do something to try to help the obviously increasing number of people who . . . are now beginning to realize what pleasure great music can give them," and that his help was to advise them to give up their idea of "a sort of ordnance highway to musical appreciation" to which they can be directed by "a musical traffic police-

man. No amount . . . of charting of 'sonata form'—which, by the way, is largely an abstraction, a myth created by the nineteenth-century pedagogues—will *of itself* enable you in the least to sense the difference between a good first movement and a poor one. . . . A symphonic first movement . . . may reproduce the 'form,' the procedure of the great first movement of the *Eroica* down to the minutest detail, and yet not be worth, as music, the paper it is written on. The vitality of the great work, the quality that makes it Beethoven's . . . must therefore reside elsewhere than in its 'form,' its 'technique.' . . . What you have to do is to discover that life for yourself and make it yours; and the only way to do it is by listening to great works until the composer's thought has become part of your own inmost being, just as you will learn, for your own nonpractical purposes, more about sculpture by spending a few weeks with the Elgin marbles than by reading descriptions of the tools with which the sculptor works and the professional manner of handling these."

Certainly one's appreciation of a piece of sculpture will not be increased by knowledge of the sculptor's tools and the methods of their use; but one might look at the Elgin marbles many weeks and fail to perceive formal relations among the elements that an expert eye could point out. So with music: Tovey is aware of the danger of confusing "knowledge which is relevant only to the discipline of an artist's training" with "knowledge that is relevant to the understanding of works of art"; but the latter knowledge includes, for him, the realities of sonata form that can be observed in Haydn's practice, which, he points out, "constantly upsets the orthodoxies of the text-books"; and one might listen alone to Haydn's symphonies for a long time without perceiving the things Tovey points out and without getting from them the pleasure they were intended to give. "Balance of keys, balance of sentences, and balance of contrasts, animated by a sense of dramatic movement . . .—these," says Tovey, "and not the external signs of symmetry, are the principles of

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Haydn's form"; these, I would say, are what Haydn intended the listener's mind to be affected by, as he intended it to receive from the form of a certain first movement the "impression . . . of perpetual expansion as regards themes and phrases and developments, while the perfect balance of keys and harmonies provides that sense of underlying symmetry which makes the expansion so exhilarating"; and they are what one's mind might, like Newman's, be unaware of.

Someone else, finally, may use Haydn's procedures with other ideas and produce music that isn't worth the paper it is written on. But used by Haydn with his own ideas they produce much of the life that is in his music

January 5, 1946

The Budapest Quartet has been playing Schubert and Brahms at the concerts of the New Friends of Music and repeating its Beethoven cycle at the Y.M.H.A. There can be no doubt of the loss to the quartet through Alexander Schneider's departure. One hears it in the altered sound of the entire group, in which the robust and dark-toned viola and cello are less well balanced by the two delicate and light-toned violins than they used to be when they were matched by at least one of the violins. And one hears it in Ortenberg's own playing, which lacks the vitality and style that Schneider's had. And yet, even with these losses, the performances are unique, unapproached by any others. One must, in fact, say of them what one says of Toscanini's—that they are not just great performances, or the greatest one has heard, but that in their province they are something on a different level of functioning from the best of other good performers and musicians, a product of a different order of powers of musical insight and execution. One must say this even though the performances are uneven these days—possibly as a result of fatigue and staleness from too much playing the last few years.

Schneider meanwhile continues to lead the Albeneri Trio, which also has been playing Brahms and Schubert at the New Friends and all of Beethoven's trios at the Y.M.H.A. And these have not been performances by a well-matched group of three players of equal capacities, but instead performances in which the violinist's beautiful use of his instrument and distinguished musical style have stood out sharply against the coarse playing of the cellist, the pallid, characterless sounds from the piano. I am anything but unaware of the particular talent it took to play the piano's great opening statement in the slow movement of Beethoven's Opus 97 so that its greatness was made almost completely unnoticeable; but it is a talent I do not value.

I am aware also that this gray, mouse-like piano-playing is what many listeners and critics—from long hearing of it—consider proper in ensemble performance (just as long hearing of hysterical falsification of Tchaikovsky's music has given them the idea that this is the proper way of treating that music). My own idea of what is proper in ensemble performance is playing that is pianistically beautiful and musically alive—the playing of a Rupp, a Balsam, a Harry Kaufman. And the New Friends audience heard an outstanding example of it when Webster Aitken played with a group assembled in place of the originally scheduled Budapest Quartet. I chose to listen to the concert as broadcast by WQXR; and careless microphone placement made the strings sound right in the room and the piano a mile away when it was not blanketed completely; but when it could be heard there was no mistaking the beautiful sound of Aitken's playing and the exciting continuity of rhythmic flow and phrase-logical outline that he created for the other players. Really—to quote Virgil Thomson's remark after an Aitken recital—it was not the sort of playing you hear every year; certainly it wasn't the sort of playing the New Friends audience had heard recently; and I hope it appreciated it when it heard it this time.

January 12, 1946

This is my first opportunity to speak of the festival of Fauré's music with which the Department of Music of Harvard University honored the hundredth anniversary of his birth, and of the various pleasures which the occasion gave me. Not just the pleasure of hearing two beautiful and moving works—the Requiem, which I had known, and the opera *Pénélope*, which was a new experience—beautifully performed by members of the Boston Symphony, the Harvard Glee Club, the Radcliffe Choral Society, and soloists under the direction of Nadia Boulanger. But also certain pleasures from the entire occasion—the way the music for all five concerts was selected; the way it was performed; and the way it was listened to. Not since London many years before had I experienced so agreeable an atmosphere at concerts—an atmosphere of quiet and interest created by people, young and old, who seemed to be present for no other reason than their desire to hear the music, and who were completely unself-conscious about it; as against the atmosphere of New York concerts, particularly the New Friends of Music concerts and the Budapest Quartet concerts at the Y.M.H.A., which is heavy and noisy with the ostentatiousness and restlessness of people who are there because it is the musical place to be and to say one has been.

I had been urged to attend the festival by a distinguished musician—one of “the true believer[s] in the genius of Fauré,” as Aaron Copland put it in a New York *Times* article, who are “convinced that to hear him is to love him.” This musician, long disturbed by my lack of interest in Fauré's songs and chamber music, thought I had not heard enough of the songs or the best of the chamber works. And so I went up to Harvard, and did hear a large number of songs, and the late chamber works—the second Piano Quintet, the second Sonata for violin and piano, the Piano Trio—which the true believers consider representative of the greatest Fauré, the products of his fully ma-

tured powers. But I found all these no more interesting than what I had heard before.

Mr. Copland would explain this very easily. "It is perfectly true," he wrote in the *Times*, "that you must listen closely if you would savor the exquisite distinction of Fauré's harmonies or appreciate the long line of a widely spaced melodic arch. His work has little surface originality. . . . To the superficial listener he probably sounds superficial. But those aware of musical refinements cannot help but admire the transparent texture, the clarity of thought, the well-shaped proportions." I would say, on the contrary, that it does *not* take any effort on the part of the listener to perceive the exquisite harmonies and textures in one of the chamber works; but that the greatest effort discovers nothing beyond these exquisite surfaces; and that the endless progression of these surfaces may please the ear of a superficial listener (to say nothing of a composer fascinated by their craftsmanship), but it wearies the mind of the person who requires something beyond them—the something that he finds in the Requiem or in *Pénélope*, each of which is also beautifully wrought, but in a very different style that is the medium of a very different and moving expressive content.

I should speak of the singing of many of the songs by Isabel French—of her musically intelligent use of a very limited voice. A young soprano, Olympia di Napoli, who was excellent in *Pénélope*, also sang some of the songs effectively; but in *La Bonne Chanson* William Hain's voice was frayed in its upper range and his phrasing was dull. The chamber music was excellently performed by Melville Smith and Beveridge Webster, pianists, Ruth Posselt, violinist, and members of the Boston Symphony—Gaston Elcus and Norbert Lauga, violins, Jean Lefranc, viola, and Alfred Zighera, cello—who formed a quartet of perfectly matched players that astounded and delighted me with its refinement and beauty of sound and execution. It may be that the group would play with exactly the same sound and style in a Beethoven quartet, where I would find they were incongruous; but in Fauré it was wonderfully right.

January 19, 1946

Bruno Walter's Saturday afternoon broadcast of Mahler's Fourth Symphony with the Philadelphia Orchestra was cut off, at the end of the hour, before the conclusion of the work; and this happened because at the beginning of the hour Harl McDonald used up several minutes with preliminary talk—not even an explanation of the scheme of the Fourth Symphony, but chit-chat about Stokowski's famous performance of Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand* many years ago. It was a perfect example of the pattern of American broadcasting, which represents the inability of the American broadcasting mind to conceive of anyone listening to a broadcast of music out of interest in the music, and of a symphony being broadcast with nothing more than a statement of what symphony it is and who is performing it.

There are worse examples—the worst being what a reader once described as “the six-ring circus the Metropolitan has become under commercial sponsorship.” In addition to the quiz there are two new entertainment features this year. One is a forum, on which I cannot comment since I could no more listen to Messrs. Downes, Spaeth, Bagar, and Lawrence in serious discussion than I could listen to their frolicsome answers to questions. The other is called, I believe, *Opera News of the Air*, which turned out—the first two times—to be better than its title. That is, Mr. Boris Goldovsky not only made instructive points about opera as a musical form, but he did the thing that is rarely done and that must be done: he sang and played passages of music which gave real meaning to his words for the listener. If Mr. Goldovsky had had ten minutes in which to develop his ideas by speaking and illustrating, he would have accomplished something valuable. But in accordance with American broadcasting practice he presented his ideas in an entertainment pattern—a dramatization in which he brought Mozart back to life for conversation with two Metropolitan singers and

himself; and in this pattern the ideas were robbed of time and of the listener's attention by the drama.

At the third session, the last I heard, the guest composer was not Mozart but William Schuman; and instead of the music of *Die Meistersinger* being used to teach radio listeners something about opera, the story was used to teach them the attitude Mr. Schuman would like them to have toward music like his. By all means let radio listeners be receptive to the new in music; but let me assure them that composers like Mr. Schuman have not been victims of the intolerance that is the subject of *Die Meistersinger*. Excessive tolerance has enabled some of them to get away with murder.

March 2, 1946

There is, by now, a fair amount of understanding of what W. J. Turner calls the ambiguity of Mozart—the tensions in those delicate musical forms, the intensity and passion that are implicit in them. But there still is no comparable understanding of what might be called the duality of Schubert—the iron-like power that alternates with the relaxation. No work of Schubert is more familiar than the *Unfinished* Symphony; nothing is more obvious than the compactness and force of its first movement, the fact that it is one of the most extraordinary and effective pieces of large-scale construction in the symphonic literature; yet this does not result in as much as a qualifying clause in the prevailing idea of him as a lyricist without sustained constructive power, whose large forms are mere garrulously diffuse successions of pretty tunes.

Tovey may write that the first movement of the C major Symphony has "more than Schubert's usual concentration" and its "development is conspicuously free from redundancy or digression," and that the conclusion of the work "is one of the greatest in all symphonic music." And Toscanini may reveal similar perceptions in his performance of the work. But the prevailing notion of it remains the one in the Brockway and

Weinstock *Men of Music*:⁸ "But alas! it was again on the rock of development that Schubert foundered. After proving conclusively that he could write page after page of great symphonic music, he seems to have unfocused his attention on the extremely difficult business on hand, and to have lapsed into . . . irrelevant garrulousness. Thus, the C major concludes on a maundering, inconsequential note . . ." The occasional slackness and diffuseness certainly are part of the truth about Schubert; but there is little appreciation of the occasional integration and force that are the rest of that truth.

An extraordinary example of the duality in Schubert's music is the first movement of the Piano Sonata Opus 78. Its tranquilly, spaciouly meditative opening statement in G major establishes the mood of the entire exposition, which, after some increased liveliness and force, quiets down to last D major references to the opening statement that give implications of complete finality to the meditative tranquility. We are, therefore, entirely unprepared for what happens now in the development: for the meditative opening statement, with the power it acquires now from being *ff* in G minor, from the tensions this creates in its rhythm, from the tensions in the imitations of this rhythm by bare octaves in the bass, from the eruptions of these octaves that carry the passage to a proclamation tremendous in its *fff* sonority and its sustained distentions. The tension is relaxed in a quiet interlude, only to be built up again in the same way to the same climax, and to be relaxed again in the same interlude; then the rhythm of the interlude is hammered out by treble and bass octaves in imitation with increasing intensity to a point where the music subsides into a long and poignant transition to the opening statement in G major, which reestablishes the mood of meditative tranquility for the recapitulation. And what is extraordinary about this example of the Schubert duality is the power in the development that is created out of, and resolved into, the tranquil meditation of the exposition and recapitulation.

Webster Aitken's recent performance of this movement real-

ized its duality with magnificent effect: there were the proper quiet, spaciousness, plasticity, and grace in the exposition and recapitulation, the proper hair-raising power in the development; moreover—to consider Aitken the pianist as well as the musician—there was the beauty of the sound that he produced from the piano, whether in the subtle gradations from *p* to *f* of the exposition and recapitulation, or in the *ff*'s and *fff*'s of the development. As for the subsequent movements, I will repeat what I said when Aitken played the work a couple of years ago: I feel them to be more relaxed than he does; but though I have this different conception of them I can enjoy what he makes of them in accordance with his own conception, and the evidence in this of his great musical intelligence and mastery of his instrument.

What started me on the long train of thought about Schubert's duality was this paragraph in Jerome D. Bohm's *Herald Tribune* review of Aitken's recital: "His discourse of Schubert's G major Sonata, one of the composer's most poetic products, and one which demands a blend of inwardness, tenderness, and ingratiating charm for convincing realization of the composer's message, was planned on too austere monumental a scale, so that the music's inherent qualities were all but obliterated by the top-heavy dynamic gamut utilized."

April 20, 1946

Franz Rupp, in the performance of Beethoven's First Piano Concerto that I mentioned recently, astonished me alternately with playing that was even more beautiful than any I had heard him do, and with playing flawed by excesses that I could not recall having heard before. In the first, a relaxed attitude showed itself in the relaxed positions and movements of his hands, in the beautiful sound which these produced, and in the fluidity of the phrasing; and an unforgettable example of all this was the ornamented restatement of the opening theme in the middle of the slow movement, in which there were the clarity

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of rhythmic articulation producing the clarity of subtly inflected contour that one hears in Toscanini's phrasing, and the precise chiseling of the fine gradations of beautiful sound that one hears in Horowitz's playing. But at other times there was the kind of playing that provided a shock at the piano's very first entrance, where I expected a simple, quiet delivery of the simple, quiet statement that Beethoven marked *p* in the score, and I heard instead a tense distention of sound that was loud, hard, and as percussive as the straining fingers looked. This may have been related to the exaggeration of the Beethoven vigor that manifested itself, for example, in the excessive bouncing buoyancy of the finale.

Reading a review of the performance afterwards, I recalled the article on music criticism about a year ago in which Virgil Thomson, after describing criticism of a musical occasion as "expert testimony" on "the nature of the execution and of the works executed," distinguished in it the areas of agreement and disagreement. "Qualified musicians do not disagree much about who sang off pitch or played false notes. And their purely musical analyses of works complement one another more often than they contradict." But "radical disagreement comes into published criticism . . . exactly where it comes into private conversation": with "tastes and predilections," mere likes and dislikes—"all . . . personal, private, and in my ethics punctiliously privileged," even when they produce "the purest fantasy," which is "where criticism takes its place in belles lettres with all the rest of imaginative literature." For, he concluded, "in a democracy, once the facts of anything are ascertained and their classification agreed upon, any opinion about them is legitimate that can be expressed in clear language."

It was one of Thomson's pat schematizations of elements and operations as he wanted them to be; and as I read it I thought of the elements and operations of music criticism as they really are. Actually, much of the disagreement in criticism occurs precisely where Thomson says it does not occur, and where he would be right in saying it should not occur. Qualified musi-

cians should not disagree on the nature of a work or of its execution—on the kind of facts about it that should be, as he contends they are, exactly ascertainable by expert judgment; but they do disagree on these facts. They may not disagree about who sang off pitch or played false notes; but Thomson and I have disagreed on the simple facts of a Toscanini performance of the *Missa Solemnis*—on whether, as he contended, “there was no continuity in dynamic gamut” but only a constant “unsubtle contrasting of force with weakness,” or whether, as I contended (and as a recording of the performance confirmed), there was all the “continuity in dynamic gamut” that Beethoven asked for. And Jerome D. Bohm and I disagree on the simple facts of Rupp’s performance in the Beethoven concerto—on whether, as Bohm wrote in the review that recalled Thomson’s article to my mind, Rupp played “with almost unrelieved percussiveness,” or whether, as I have written, his occasional percussive playing alternated with the beautiful playing I have described.

Actually, then, the privileged personal factors do not keep themselves scrupulously out of the process of expert determination of the facts of a piece of music or its performance; actually they inject themselves into that process and cause it to produce the pure fantasy of the lack of continuity in dynamic gamut in Toscanini’s performance of the *Missa Solemnis*, or of the unrelieved percussiveness of Rupp’s playing in the concerto. And the question arises whether in this actual situation Thomson would insist that the punctiliously privileged personal and private whatever-you-want-to-call-it that causes a qualified musician to hear only unrelieved percussiveness in Rupp’s playing must continue to be punctiliously privileged; and that in a democracy even the fantasy that the playing was unrelievedly percussive must be considered legitimate—not just in the critic’s private conversation but in his published *belles lettres*. I imagine Thomson would; and I would have to agree—despite misgivings concerned with the effect of the published fantasy on the public in New York and the concert committees elsewhere who

MAY 4, 1946

depend on newspaper reviews in deciding whether to hear and to engage a pianist. These misgivings Thomson does not share, as he stated explicitly in a more recent article that I will come to later.*

May 4, 1946

I heard De Luca a great deal in his first years at the Metropolitan, and again in 1934-35, if I remember correctly; and I retain sharp recollections of his beautiful voice and of his art in its production and manipulation. That art was again in evidence, at his recent New York recital, in his employment of the voice it had helped to preserve: it produced astonishingly spun-out sequences not only of tones in the lower range that still retained some of their beauty, but of high tones that were dry and perilously thin. It was a vocal art that he exhibited in his singing, rather than a musical one—an art in singing, not in musical phrasing; an art which occasionally as it spun out a legato sequence produced a beautiful musical phrase, but occasionally pulled the phrase out of shape. And the phrases of the aria *Aprite un po' quegli occhi* from the last act of *The Marriage of Figaro* were made hash of by an experienced singing actor's art in pointing them up for laughs.

This provides an occasion to speak of Caruso, who is rightly thought of as a great artist, but whose art also was a vocal, not a musical one. When Caruso was, as he put it, "emotionated" his emotion did not express itself in inflection of the musical phrase that employed his voice, but in manipulation of his voice that sometimes produced a beautiful legato phrase and sometimes tore the phrase to pieces. The flow of lovely sound in the first phrases of *O Paradiso!* is musical perfection; its climactic B flat which Caruso holds and expands from *pp* to the splendor of *ff* is a breath-taking bit of vocal manipulation—but it causes him to break the phrase; whereas Björling, who is a superb musical as well as vocal artist, makes the B flat part of a con-

*I never got around to it.

tinuous phrase-line. So with *Parmi veder le lagrime*: Jan Peerce's recent record caused me to listen to Caruso's, which shocked me with the way his exuberance in his vocal style distorts phrases and robs them of the musical sense and power they have as Peerce sings them. And so with the *Una furtiva lagrima* on the reverse side of Caruso's *Parmi veder* record: even the vocal splendors that produce its musical excesses lose their impressiveness when I listen to the flawless vocal art in the service of beautiful musical art in the performance by John McCormack.

Caruso, of course, had no patience with such distinctions. Of one of the reviews of a Montreal concert—"not so nice like everyone else"—he wrote his wife: "Imagine, this said that I, as a concert singer, am lower of Gogorza and Julia Culp! Bravo the idiot!"

May 11, 1946

First there were the advertisements with their quotations from newspaper reviews of Maryla Jonas's recital, and in particular the *Herald Tribune's* "finest woman pianist since Teresa Carreño." Then there were the newspaper stories about that sensational first recital of a completely unknown pianist, attended by a handful of public and a few second-string reviewers who had expected the usual debut recital and had been electrified by what they heard. It seemed like something one ought to hear; and so I went to the second recital.

Carnegie Hall was filled this time when Mme. Jonas appeared, seated herself at the piano, waited for the audience to become quiet, and then slowly lowered her head until it was about six inches from the hands that began to produce a barely audible *pppp* for the opening arpeggios of Mozart's D minor Fantasia. After this introduction the first melodic passage was played with continuing ostentatious intentness on the production of non-legato sounds with exaggerated arm movements, and on the continuing exaggerated quiet—to the point where sud-

denly all of Mme. Jonas stiffened in the evident intensity of purpose with which she poised her right arm over the keyboard and then struck it a blow that hurt one's ears with the jangling *ffff*. And this over-dramatic alternation of the utmost extremes of soft and loud, produced with these visual theatricalisms, constituted the total sum of the interpretative resources that were employed in the presentation of Mozart's Fantasia, a Beethoven Rondo, and Bach's D major Toccata. Only with the beginning of Schubert's Impromptu Opus 90 No. 3 was there the beginning of normal, unaffected piano-playing that was quite lovely; but it did not continue throughout the piece. And in Chopin's Polonaise Opus 71 No. 2 there was a return to the alternation of dynamic extremes—a passage being first hammered out, then repeated in a whisper, all with exaggeration of the mannered style that is considered proper for Chopin. At that point I thought I knew how Mme. Jonas played music on the piano, and left.

Olin Downes, the next day, informed his *Times* readers that he had entered Carnegie Hall as Mme Jonas was playing Bach's Toccata—at a point, it appeared later, of "self-communing" in the music, when "the piano spoke, in a way that with a whisper of tone commanded and held the attention in the spaces of Carnegie Hall"; and that "he came to the immediate conclusion that he was listening to a poet and master of her instrument." On the other hand the concluding fugue—as assaulted and battered by Mme. Jonas—impressed Mr. Downes with the "bold announcement of the subject, the clearness, and energy, and power of its development." It would seem hardly remarkable that a pianist should play Schubert's Impromptu and Chopin's Polonaise differently; but for Mr. Downes this became a significant "complete distinction between the lyricism of Schubert and the lyricism of Chopin," which revealed an understanding, rarely encountered in pianists, of the nature of both composers, of the "naivete" of Schubert and the "more complex psychology and far greater sophistication of Chopin"—Schubert, apparently, being in Mr. Downes's mind only the naive composer of the

Impromptu Opus 90 No. 3, not the psychologically complex composer of the later piano sonatas. "Never exaggerating," for Mr. Downes's ears, Mme. Jonas "proved that she has the secret, not shared by many, of Chopin's 'rubato'"—in performances in which "she caught with intuition each fluctuation of color, tempo, and mood." And more of same.

In *PM*, a couple of days later, Robert A. Hague turned out to have heard the "meticulous concentration on detail and nuance of tone," which was "a little wearing," and the "little bursts of dramatic emphasis and general fussiness she displayed in Mozart's D minor Fantasia and Beethoven's C major Rondo." But he also, evidently, had seen the lowered head of "a pure musician and a selfless interpreter, completely submerging her own personality in an uncompromising devotion to the music in hand." And he had heard "fine quality of tone, dynamic variety, shape, breadth, and profound understanding" in her performance of the Bach Toccata; "deep insight, flawless technique, and remarkable beauty of tone" in performances which "fully revealed the romantic poetry, the shifting moods and colors of Chopin."

I found no review in the *Herald Tribune*; and instead of looking for any others I hunted up the *Herald Tribune* review of the first recital. It turned out to have been written by—of all people—Jerome D. Bohm; and I say "of all people" because a man whose stern ears could not concede even qualified recognition of the outstanding musical and pianistic competence of a Webster Aitken or a Franz Rupp is the last one I would expect to describe a Maryla Jonas as "a musician with a remarkable command of style . . . mastery of the tonal resources of the piano . . . a widespread, variegated coloristic gamut . . ." including a "loudest fortissimo" that "remained pithy and round," and to find in her a player "in the grand manner . . . [that] one has become accustomed to thinking moribund," who provided heartening knowledge that "the great tradition is safe in her hands." But turned around it becomes entirely understandable: the man who is impressed by the ham acting and playing

JUNE 29, 1946

of a Maryla Jonas will be deaf to the art of an Aitken or a Rupp.

June 29, 1946

Now and then I am made aware of the curious notions that most people have about criticism. Recently, for example, I received in an envelope my record column of May 25 with *Records* crossed out and *Likes and Dislikes* substituted at the top, and with each statement that I liked or disliked something underlined throughout the article. As though criticism properly is something more than personal likes and dislikes, and as though such likes and dislikes are mere whims. Actually criticism is as personal as the art it deals with; it begins with the critic's experience of, and response to, the work of art with his particular resources for the purpose; and it ends with his formulation of his judgment—a reasoned statement of like or dislike. My reader underlined my dislike of Brahms's Violin Concerto and again of Szigeti's performance; but he paid no attention to the subsequent statement that "music as pretentious as the first movement, as saccharine as the second, should not be played with fussy, tremulous inflection that exaggerates its faults," which made it clear that the dislike was not mere whim but reasoned judgment of my experience of the work and the performance. But those who like Brahms or Puccini can account for my dislike only on the assumption that it represents not experience but prejudice—that, literally, I judge without knowledge of the music; and when I reply that I do know it very well they contend that I cannot have heard it performed properly.

This is the contention of a reader who has written to "take strong exception to the calling of Puccini's music tripe" in my column of May 4; but in addition he asks: "Do you actually mean to say that Puccini's music, which has thrilled thousands the world over, is bad?" I might ask in return whether Hollywood's products, which have thrilled millions the world over, are therefore good. But the right answer is Bernard Shaw's

JULY 13, 1946

statement in one of his dramatic reviews fifty years ago: "It is the business of the critic to educate these dunces, not to echo them." Or as I once put it in this column, a magazine doesn't hire a critic to genuflect before the limited perceptions of the multitude but to give its readers the benefit of the greater perceptions he is presumed to have.

At this point I received from another reader—a Viennese now in this country—the letter he writes me when I express a low opinion of some highly regarded work or composer. Each time he rebukes and corrects me by quoting at me the all too familiar phrases of the official opinion that I have rejected; and his perplexity and indignation when I continue to reach my own conclusions are evident in his latest letter. "I really don't know what to think of you, reading your lines about the Brahms First: 'the worst of this dreadful work' (*The Nation* of June 8). Are you serious about it? Because that work always was (and is) considered to continue where Beethoven's Ninth left off. And the *Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*, edited by O. Thompson, says on page 225: 'The four symphonies [of Brahms] have taken their places among the masterpieces of their class and the world accords Brahms the symphonist a rank second only to Beethoven. The First Symphony is distinguished especially by its Olympian grandeur.' Is this not enough for you? I should be surprised at you . . ." And not—I foresee—for the last time.

July 13, 1946

Occasionally I am also reminded of people's notions about performance. Thus, a reader questioned my May 4 reference to Caruso's art as "a vocal, not a musical one": it seemed to him that if one heard a great vocal art one heard a great musical one—that the free flow of beautiful sound was musical.

In my article I had explained "vocal art rather than a musical one" as "an art in singing, not in musical phrasing," and

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had said that Caruso's emotion "did not express itself in inflection of the musical phrase that employed his voice, but in manipulation of his voice that sometimes produced a beautiful legato phrase and sometimes tore the phrase to pieces." But evidently this distinction had no meaning for my reader, as it has none for most people—the people, for example, who are surprised, bewildered, or even outraged by my criticisms of musicians like Heifetz, Horowitz, and Koussevitzky. I am not referring now to those for whom the performance of any celebrated musician is good, and all the performances by celebrated musicians are equally good in their various ways. I am referring to those who reason that to perform a piece of music is to produce the required sounds, and to produce beautiful sounds is to perform the piece well, and who, dazzled by the tonal splendors produced by Heifetz or Horowitz or Koussevitzky, ask what can be wrong with them, what indeed could be better. They neither perceive nor can understand the distinction between the sensuous quality of a violinist's tone and the phraseological inflection of the tone, and the fact that the dazzling beauty of Heifetz's tone amounts to superb playing of the violin but his fussy, wailing inflection of the tone most often produces a sentimentalizing, cheapening performance of the music.

A letter from another reader made this distinction about Koussevitzky. "The sound was marvelously fine; and the *Eroica* was a real performance, which carried a certain conviction because it was all so consistent and carefully worked out. There were, of course, the characteristic distortions of the quiet melodies of the first movement; and comparing it with Toscanini's performance revealed exactly what you have always pointed out in Toscanini's playing—the alive flow, the rhythmic continuity, which carries the music forward always with a kind of inevitability, so that the huge intensities come about naturally yet with greatest effect, nothing is distorted or over-emphasized, and the piece adds up to a tremendous intensity and force. The Koussevitzky first movement did not build up at all. Everything was played beautifully but it didn't make a large whole;

as a result the climaxes seemed tame and without the exciting meaning Toscanini gives them . . . But the sound of the orchestra is one of the refinements of civilization."

But a great musician I know surprised me recently by dismissing Koussevitzky as "no conductor, only a dilettante." I was surprised because it turned out that he was thinking of the rhythmic slovenliness, distortion of phrase, and other musical defects that had caused him to leave the concert before the end; and I would have expected him to distinguish Koussevitzky the musician from Koussevitzky the conductor. But then he surprised me further by insisting that he meant the conductor too, contending that the orchestra played marvelously because it was a group of wonderful musicians; and I would have expected him to know better than that. The orchestra that Koussevitzky conducted at his first concert in New York, in November 1924, was the same group of players that Monteux had conducted the preceding April; but its sonority and style were astonishingly changed to what—despite all subsequent changes in personnel—has remained the characteristic sonority and style of the Boston Symphony ever since; and clearly what changed them and then kept them unchanged—except to polish and refine and perfect them—was Koussevitzky. It is the years of work with him that make it possible for the orchestra to play with the same fabulous beauty and finish without him, as it did, for example, when Nadia Boulanger beat time for it at the Harvard Fauré Festival.

The continuity in a Toscanini performance is, first, one of impetus: the progression, once it is set going, never sags or breaks, but carries over from each sound to the next. And it is, in addition, plastic: an unerring plastic sense makes each of the changes in sonority and pace that inflect the contour of the melodic line and shape the tonal mass proportional to what precedes and follows, thus gives the developing form in sound coherence, and causes each sound in this coherent progression to imply, by its timing and force, the timing and force of the

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next, so that the successive sounds fall into place with inevitability and ease.

This continuity in the moment-to-moment flow of the performance is produced by a continuous activity—a moment-to-moment exercise of the utmost attentiveness, concentration and control. Once he has set the progression going, Toscanini marshals it along, watches over it, controls it to make it come out as he planned. The marshaling is done mostly with those large, plastic, sensitive movements of his right arm (extended to the point of his baton), which delineate for the orchestra the flow of sound in much of its subtly inflected detail and literally conduct the orchestra from one sound to the next in that flow—the effectiveness of these movements being due to their extraordinary explicitness in conveying his wish at every moment, and to the compelling personal force which they also convey. The left hand, meanwhile, is in constant and fascinating activity as the instrument of the watchfulness that shows itself on Toscanini's face—now exhorting, now quieting, now warning, now suppressing.

The relation of these two geared continuities of activity and sound is fascinating and moving to watch as the unself-conscious operation—in response to each momentary situation—of a combination of powers beyond anything we have known or are likely to encounter again. And I find it moving for an additional reason: not only is every movement equal to the situation but it never is more than equal to it; those extraordinary powers operate, then, with an economy that is a form of honesty in relation to the situation and material; and in this way the performance is, in addition to everything else, a moral experience which I find intensely moving.

It is those two geared continuities of activity and sound, then, that the OWI film of Toscanini's performances of Verdi's Overture to *La Forza del Destino* and *Hymn of the Nations* should have given us, by keeping him in uninterrupted view throughout each performance and establishing his momentary relation to members of the orchestra by changing the direction of the

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camera to include them or by combining their image with his. Instead the film uses the conventional technique of films of orchestral performances—of shifting back and forth between conductor and orchestra. This gives us a number of close-range shots of Toscanini in action—but each broken off after a few moments to show the blowing of the woodwinds or the plucking of the harps. The shots are impressive and exciting, but not as the uninterrupted sequence would be.

July 27, 1946

Discussing a volume of Nietzsche's writings many years ago Shaw described how a philosopher could operate with spurious materials—how, "having pieced an illusory humanity and art out of the effects produced by his library on his imagination, [he can] build some silly systematization of his worthless ideas over the abyss of his own nescience." As I read this I reflected that with only a few modifications it would describe similar operations of the musicologists. Thus, of the article on chamber music that Professor Lang contributed to a New Friends of Music booklet last year one might say that having pieced illusory nineteenth-century audiences, composers, and music out of the effects produced by his imagination on the facts, he built a systematization of his inventions over the abyss of suppressed truth.

To deal with the entire article would take an entire issue of *The Nation*; let it suffice, therefore, that for Professor Lang chamber music, in the nineteenth century, was reduced to "the private affair of a musical minority, a musical élite" which was "able to derive enjoyment from 'absolute' music"; while the public musical scene was dominated by the "Bengal light" orchestral sonorities of program music, the music with extra-musical meaning that was "dictated" by the new concert-hall public "composed of the large mass of the middle classes" who "possessed the necessary general culture but whose musical capabilities could not rise to pure music." And let it suffice to

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say that actually chamber music and other non-programmatic instrumental music continued to be written throughout the century—by Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Dvorak, Fauré, among countless others—at the same time as program music and often even by the same composers; that it was performed at public concerts for members of the middle-class public; that Edwin Denby's observation—"to recognize poetic suggestion through dancing one has to be susceptible to poetic values and susceptible to dance values as well"—is true also of poetic suggestion through music; indeed that as cultivated a musical taste is required by the subtleties of melody, harmony, instrumentation, and form which convey the poetic suggestion of the *Love Scene* of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* as by the analogous subtleties of a Mozart string quintet; and what "dictated" the composition of music like *Romeo and Juliet* was the stimulation of the composers' musical imagination by poetry.

August 24, 1946

Jazz is a new material not only for the musicological system-grinders but for the academic course-makers. The following questions were sent to a number of music critics by a member of a college teaching staff who wrote that the answers and comments would be part of the material he was assembling "in connection with the contemplated introduction of jazz into the music curriculum:"

1. What is the position of jazz in modern music?
2. Will jazz make any permanent contribution to music? If so, what?
3. Could jazz be taught in the music schools? Would such instruction be of value?

In reply I wrote: "A course in jazz could be given and would be valuable if it was devoted to letting the student *hear* jazz—this for two purposes: (1) by familiarizing him with it—and solely by that method—to develop his taste for it; (2) to make

clear to him the difference between jazz and the forms of popular music that are not jazz, such as the show music of Gershwin and Berlin and the large-band performances of arrangements of this music."

In other words, "the course would not be concerned with the 'position of jazz in modern music' and its 'permanent contribution to music.' Your questions on these matters represent first of all the academic attitude in the teaching of music—which is to teach not the piece of music as a piece of music, a particular artistic communication, but the piece of music as a collection of stylistic manifestations related to other such collections in the development of music. And that is something I consider completely wrong. Your questions further represent the long current notions about the relation of jazz to American serious music, which are also wrong. In these ideas jazz has been taken incorrectly to mean the show music of Gershwin and Berlin; and even about this music the ideas have been wrong, and your questions are on the wrong track—as you may realize if I ask the analogous questions about the position and contribution of the Viennese waltz. But it is even worse when the ideas and questions are about jazz in the correct sense—the improvisation of small groups like those of Louis Armstrong; and again you may realize this if I ask the analogous questions about the position and contribution of Spanish *cante flamenco*."

And in conclusion, "the fundamental error is that of thinking that these forms of popular music acquire importance and value only from a relation with, an absorption into, serious music, instead of realizing their sufficiency and validity, their importance and value in and for themselves."

But if the course is given I am sure it will be devoted to the ideas about the position and permanent contribution of jazz in serious music that were supplied by the other critics whom my correspondent wrote to. It will be devoted, that is, to the ideas which provide the kind of material a college course can be made of—which lend themselves to classroom discussion, note-

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taking, memorizing, and questions and answers for academic bookkeeping.

November 30, 1946

In Aaron Copland's recent works—like *Rodeo* and *Appalachian Spring*—one hears Copland's matured "modern" style, and an occasional integration of this style with American folk music or with the idiom of this music. They are the end of a development, of which the beginning is the Piano Concerto, composed in 1926 but performed in New York for the first time only recently. In this work one hears the big raucous noises of a first attempt at a "modern" style; and one hears phrases of hot jazz pianists, clarinetists, and trumpeters—phrases torn out of their original contexts and not integrated with the "modern" noises. The jazz phrases remain mere quotations, which astonish and after a while amuse one with their extraordinary accuracy; they succeed each other but do not develop; and that, in fact, is true of all the substance of the work, which is interesting only as part of the documentation of Copland's development as a composer. The performance by Leo Smit with the New York City Symphony under Leonard Bernstein was excellent.

Not having heard Benjamin Britten's most recent opera I don't know whether it justifies the recent contention of a writer in the London *New Statesman and Nation* that one now had to speak not of Britten's talent but of his genius. If I were to judge by the violin concerto, composed in 1939, that Bernstein performed at another of his concerts I would not speak even of talent. There is not an idea in it that is worth anyone's attention—to say nothing of the superb skill wasted on its difficulties by Werner Lywen, the soloist in the performance.

February 22, 1947

In the latest New York Philharmonic crisis Rodzinski accuses Arthur Judson of usurping power in artistic matters that the

business manager of an orchestra should not have, and of using it improperly for his own interests as a manager of concert artists. The artistic matters Rodzinski refers to include the appearances of guest conductors and soloists with the orchestra; and he contends that they are properly among the things over which the musical director of an orchestra should have power, not the business manager, and certainly not a business manager who is also a manager of conductors and soloists and who, instead of engaging artists for the artistic benefit of the orchestra, can use appearances with the orchestra in its concerts and broadcasts to build up the prestige and commercial value of the artists he manages and to lure artists away from other managers. In this general contention Rodzinski is right beyond any question; and as far as his own case is concerned one might, as I did and still do, question his fitness for the post of musical director of the Philharmonic, but if one decided to give it to him one would be obligated to give the powers over artistic matters that go with it to him, not to Mr. Judson.

This is one of the occasions when a music critic must speak not only to the public but for it; and Virgil Thomson, in his Sunday article on the subject, spoke out precisely and unequivocally about the "unbalance of power" that is "the trouble with the Philharmonic," and about the fact that "Arthur Judson is unsuited by the nature and magnitude of his business interests to manage with the necessary self-effacement a major intellectual institution doing business with his other interests." For Olin Downes, on the other hand, too little had been published of Rodzinski's charges and the directors' answers, and "the details of this matter are not this column's present concern"—which enabled him to escape from the immediate issue into a two-column cloud of history and generalization.

One passage in Mr. Downes's article calls for comment. Speaking of past mistakes he wrote: "Why John Barbirolli . . . was made musical director of the orchestra . . . and maintained there . . . for seasons after he had conclusively demonstrated his insufficiency for that post is still a mystery which has been

impossible to solve. As a result the orchestra quickly and appallingly retrograded . . . while reviewers became positively embarrassed to record the level of mediocrity, or worse, in the performances." Actually the Philharmonic management was able to maintain Barbirolli in his post because of reviews such as Mr. Downes's in the *Times* of October 11, 1940—characteristic not only in its swirling flood of muddy thought and prose, but in the way the truth about Barbirolli's performances of Elgar's *Enigma* Variations and Sibelius's Second Symphony was restricted to slight, unobtrusive, and minimized qualifications of the lavish praise. The Sibelius symphony, for example, "was read, for the greater part, in bardic vein. There was breadth and sweep of line in places where interpreters have fussed with detail. . . . There was sensitive treatment of details of delicate and haunting instrumental effects. . . . A thoughtful reading was distinguished prevailingly by fine proportions and a real sense of form"—after which one read that "where this feeling was lost was in places where tempo was too suddenly whipped up or slowed down," and, paradoxically, "the impression was of a too calculated performance, with many fine attributes, one which, had all previous calculations been forgotten, and the music given its head, would have been a complete instead of a conditioned success."

This was hardly an embarrassed recording of mediocrity or worse, and anything but a demonstration of the conductor's insufficiency for his post; and Barbirolli probably would be conducting the Philharmonic today if it had not been for Mr. Thomson, who summed up his impressions of the same concert with the statement that "the music itself was soggy, the playing dull and brutal." It was after he had spoken out that others, including Mr. Downes, followed; and it was under this pressure that the Philharmonic directors acted to replace Barbirolli. So today: if they had only the material in the *Times* to worry about they wouldn't worry at all; and if they do act to take the Philharmonic out of Mr. Judson's power it will be under the pressure created by Mr. Thomson's comment.

Not that this seems likely: what the eruption has brought into the open is not merely the unbalance of power as between the business manager and the musical director within the Philharmonic, but the status of the Philharmonic itself in relation to other organizations, which is responsible for that unbalance. The Philharmonic is not, like the Boston Symphony, an independent organization with its own business manager and legal representatives who deal with the representatives of artist bureaus and recording and broadcasting companies. Its status is rather like that of a captive coal mine of U. S. Steel: not only is it managed by the head of Columbia Concerts Corporation, but a member of the legal counsel for C.B.S., Columbia Recording Corporation, and Columbia Concerts Corporation is the Philharmonic's lawyer and an audibly influential member of its board of directors.

That material in the *Times*—Mr. Downes's Sunday article, the early news stories carrying smears of Rodzinski that had later to be retracted, the story of Mr. Judson's career on the Sunday music page, which might have been written by his publicity representative—is the sort of thing one expects to find in a conservative newspaper, which believes literally in conserving whatever exists and functions and has money invested in it or important people associated with it, and which therefore believes that nothing or as little as possible should be said that will discredit it or those people. One would expect to find the same thing in the *Herald Tribune*; but that review of Mr. Thomson's in 1940 was only the first of many surprises.

But though Mr. Downes operates as the critic of a conservative paper, a big enough issue will move him to the proper response. Let a conductor keep his audience quiet between movements of a symphony, and the Downes anger will spill out on paper. Let the musicians' union ask an orchestra for a higher weekly minimum, or let composers try to increase the modest fee for performances of their music, and there will be an indignant Downes harumphing about this dangerous attempt to exact "all that the traffic will bear." I would give something

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to hear the composers and orchestral musicians on the subject of Mr. Downes's income from his various services to music.

March 8, 1947

Olin Downes's first article on the New York Philharmonic crisis, in which he evaded the issues, was bad enough; but even worse was his second article, in which he dealt with them with beclouding indirection and evasion.

Thus he began with a hullabaloo about the misbehavior of Rodzinski, who had had "ample time to make any complaints, public or private . . . at the appropriate moment and in the most effective way," but whose "suddenly proffered resignation" had "resulted in forcing the Philharmonic-Symphony on the spur of the moment to choose its conductors for the balance of this season and next with a haste that . . . cannot be for the best good of the famous artistic organization which Dr. Rodzinski professes to love so much." One must suppose Rodzinski had done a lot of complaining before the point when he was offered a new contract that he had either to accept or refuse; and actually it was the Philharmonic that created the emergency Mr. Downes described, by dismissing Rodzinski immediately when he resigned as of next October.

Next Mr. Downes devoted a couple of paragraphs to Rodzinski's complaints and to doubts of their accuracy or justification, before conceding that "the permanent conductor must be engaged on the basis of his abilities, then given undisputed authority in purely artistic matters, and held responsible for the results"—and only to add: "But there must be flexible cooperation and practical adjustment all around," and "The conductor's ascendancy with his board will always depend largely upon his acumen, personal force, and public power." Which brought him to "the question of paramount importance . . . the one of the double-barreled managerial relation of Mr. Judson and the orchestra."

On this question Thomson had been forthright and clear: "Arthur Judson is unsuited by the nature and magnitude of his business interests to manage with the necessary self-effacement a major intellectual institution doing business with his other interests." But Mr. Downes found it necessary to begin with an explanation of how natural it had been for the Philharmonic, twenty-five years ago, to engage as its manager a man who "was already the manager of another orchestra—the Philadelphia—and of a number of individual artists," since "it was the period of big combinations in business, finance, railroading, and all the rest of it." Now, however, that period is near its end, "business and politics are changing their methods," and besides "there is not too close a comparison between a manager who had half a dozen artists and a great orchestra under his control . . . and the manager who controls hundreds of artists with one hand . . . and directs . . . the affairs of a leading American orchestra with the other." In this roundabout way Mr. Downes arrived at a shadowy hint that Mr. Judson should no longer be manager of the Philharmonic; and it was also a way for Mr. Downes to say that Mr. Judson should go but the Philharmonic directors had not done wrong in engaging him originally.

Then Mr. Downes completed his maneuver by continuing: "Every director of the Philharmonic-Symphony whom we know . . . commends Mr. Judson's management. His transactions in all details that affect the Philharmonic-Symphony, including the soloists and conductors . . . their fees, commissions . . . go down on paper and are submitted each season to the careful scrutiny of the . . . board. Mr. Judson's counsel is sought by the members of that board and by many other orchestras who seek his advice as well as his collaboration in their affairs. . . ." That is, Mr. Judson should go but not because of anything wrong he had done as manager.

And the rest was more of same. "In the light of all these things, the subject of his relations with the Philharmonic-Symphony is open to reconsideration." This carried implications which were at once denied: "There is no doubt of the practical

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effectiveness of the present arrangements but they can be open to criticism in principle. The policies and procedure of an orchestra such as the Philharmonic-Symphony," Mr. Downes elaborated in a deathless sentence, "must be as remote from the slightest suspicion of outside influence or interest as Caesar's wife." This again carried implications that were at once denied: "The situation is not of any individual's making, or of anyone's ability or integrity. It is one occasioned by the development of social and musical conditions of today." And so on.

If in his first article Mr. Downes wrote as the critic of a conservative paper, in his second he carried this to the point of acting virtually as a Philharmonic mouthpiece. His statement about the fees and commissions for Columbia Concerts Corporation conductors and soloists all being set down on the Philharmonic books was similar to the statement by Mr. Charles Triller of the Philharmonic board, who in addition revealed how small the amounts paid to Columbia Concerts were. Perhaps Mr. Triller and Mr. Downes really thought these amounts were Mr. Judson's entire stake in his Philharmonic manager-ship; but you may be sure Mr. Judson himself knew better. What he is concerned with—in the appearances of Columbia Concerts artists with the Philharmonic—is not the few thousands that Columbia Concerts makes on these appearances, but the many thousands it makes on the increased number of engagements and the higher fees which these artists get all over the country as a result of their Philharmonic appearances. And the objection to the head of Columbia Concerts being manager of the Philharmonic is, as I pointed out, the possibility this creates of his using appearances with the orchestra to build up the prestige and commercial value of the artists he manages.

Mr. Downes wrote that other orchestras "seek his advice as well as his collaboration in their affairs." More correctly, Mr. Judson has influence over other orchestras because of his control of certain soloists whom they need as box-office attractions—influence which he can use to make them engage other soloists

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whom they don't care about. He exercises additional influence on some of these orchestras through their conductors, who are under his management and owe their posts to him. And here again his control of the New York Philharmonic is valuable to him, since he can dangle before them the possibilities of guest appearances with that orchestra.

Mr. Judson can afford, then, to donate his commissions from the Philharmonic to the orchestra's pension fund. He could afford to give up the salary he gets as manager. More important, he could relinquish the managership itself, and he would continue to exercise influence through his conductors, through the Philharmonic board members who seek his counsel, and above all through the highly influential board member who is the lawyer of Columbia Broadcasting System, Columbia Recording Corporation, and Columbia Concerts Corporation (the Philharmonic's prestige is commercially valuable to Columbia Broadcasting and Columbia Recording, and Philharmonic appearances are a means of building up the prestige and commercial values of the recording company's artists).

To liberate the Philharmonic from Mr. Judson one would have to liberate it from those through whom he could control it.

March 15, 1947

In recognition of Koussevitzky's service to American composers they gave him a testimonial dinner a year ago, and more recently the League of Composers gave a concert in his honor which provided him with the opportunity for some of the portentous pronouncements that he loves to make and that tend to get out of control—like "The supreme goal of the composer is to conquer time—to be in the past, in the present, and in the future, to convey the infinity of thought, emotion, and ideal, symbolizing eternity."

A little closer to earth was his contention that "no matter how much is done for the composer—it is not enough! Because

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the composer is the ever-living source, the life-giving oxygen without which music cannot exist." And his statement later on that "in music a score completed at the desk of the composer is only the beginning of the work to be accomplished; its fulfillment demands the cooperation of an auxiliary energy and a body of active and organized forces." The two statements complement each other: the composer is the source of what is brought to fulfillment by an auxiliary energy. And this means more than it appears to mean.

Its meaning is revealed by a letter from a musician who was able to listen to Koussevitzky's recording of Copland's *Appalachian Spring* with the score, and who is indignant about "the cuts (disgraceful), the bad playing (surprising), and the conductor's liberties with the score: at one place the music races twice as fast as the composer indicates. . . . To thousands of listeners that music will sound as Koussevitzky plays it, not as Copland conceived it." Koussevitzky once characterized a critic who had demanded obedience to the composer's score as a man who "doesn't want the music to be alive"; and from his changes of slow to fast (and fast to slow, also) in Copland's *Appalachian Spring* it is evident that he means those words about the music of living as well as dead composers. One cannot do enough for the composer; and the conductor doesn't do enough for him when he merely plays his music: Koussevitzky's own "cooperation" in its "fulfillment" has been imposition of changes in the shape of the work and its character and meaning that the composer has had to accept if he wanted it performed.

Did Mr. Copland, in his speech at that testimonial dinner he helped to arrange, say that grateful as the composers were to Koussevitzky for his performances of his altered versions of their works they would be even more grateful for performances of their own versions? Or did he realize that this would be an appeal for a humble and enlightened conception of the performer's relation to the composer that Koussevitzky already had shown himself to be incapable of?

May 17, 1947

"Form and analysis seminars have one useful purpose, at least," wrote this column's favorite correspondent, and my most recent source of information about the way music is taught in the universities. "Nobody who spends his time in one of them actually analyzing pieces of music will ever be dogmatic about form again." That is the exaggeration of youth: aged sobriety would say that nobody *should*. "I have been amazed at the variations which Mozart, the 'most formal of composers,' can produce: structures perfectly logical in their organization, perfectly capable of saying what he wants to say, yet impossible to cram into any textbook form. The people in the seminar, when they began to hit these sports (in terms of the textbook) naturally first tried to do just that; but as they progressed they discovered that the sports were more frequent than the 'normal' forms; and the result has been frustration: the terminology has broken down, and that's always a bad thing for the student mind—it means he has lost his anchor."

This was a seminar; in the classes below seminar level students are not confused in this way. It would seem axiomatic that ideas about music should be derived from experience of the music; but the students in theory classes do not normally get their ideas of musical language and form from first-hand examination of the language and forms of the works of the great composers: they get them from the textbooks of theorists "whose grammatical knowledge," said Tovey, "is based upon no known language."

Nor is this true only of the teaching of theory. In a course in history in which, my correspondent tells me, exactly one meeting was devoted to the English madrigal and lute schools—not to the music of one composer, but to the entire varied output of all the composers—and two meetings to the entire eighteenth-century comic opera, there is no time for the deriving of ideas from the music itself. "I made the mistake of looking into the

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subject of eighteenth-century comic opera, and it was two weeks before I was able to get out of it again. All this past week I have been going hammer and tongs at the Italian and English madrigal schools, so that I am now about to be familiar enough with enough of the music to feel that I know something about it; but in the meantime the history class is heaven knows where—I don't."

Most of the members of that class presumably have acquired a "knowledge" of the English madrigal and lute schools consisting of a series of names in their notebooks, each name with a sentence or two of description and evaluation copied out of a book or taken down in class. My correspondent, on the other hand, has derived from his experience of the music his own ideas and estimates of the various composers, which have led him to suspect that some of those descriptions and evaluations in books and lectures were themselves not acquired from experience of the music.

His reward for his work, he writes, has been the experience of the music—in particular the music of Dowland and of Gesualdo. "Historically Gesualdo is one of those rare and fascinating individuals, a sport"—which "makes him difficult to handle if you are writing history in terms of trends"; and so he was long ignored. But another reason for the scholars not to bother with him was that "he wrote great music: of its sort some of the most powerful I have ever heard." This led my correspondent to discover in Grove (II, p. 373) that "the ten volumes of Gesualdo's works went through not less than 25 different editions between 1594 and 1626." He was therefore not surprised by Lang's statement (*Music in Western Civilization*, p. 327)⁸⁰ that "many, if not the majority, of Gesualdo's madrigals must, however, be considered closet madrigals, because their frightful, ragged, unvocal writing makes their performance by a vocal ensemble well-nigh impossible." And he was equipped to deal with it: "That they are hard to sing cannot be doubted; that they are possible to sing is quite as obvious; that Gesualdo's contemporaries sang

them is fully demonstrated by the bibliographical record: why does Lang manufacture a myth? All this colorful patter about 'frightful, ragged, unvocal writing' is a fabrication which an examination of the madrigals disproves in a moment: I have found in them a rare augmented fourth, and occasionally a diminished fifth—which even sight-singing students are taught to sing, and which constitute the 'frightful, ragged, unvocal writing.'"

Again, since Einstein is perhaps even more known for his studies in the madrigal than for his work on Mozart, my correspondent was not surprised that the only statement about Gesualdo in Einstein's *Short History of Music*¹⁷ (p. 60) was one about the "chromaticism which . . . was to lead to extremes of daring—but not based upon clear harmonic perception and hence not fully absorbed by the main stream of development." And again he was equipped to comment: "Gesualdo's chromaticism was not based on the major-minor, tonic-dominant relationships which ultimately prevailed: why should it have been? But to claim that it is not based on clear harmonic perception is to deny the evidence of one's ears: in every example I have been able to run down it always comes off—provided one is not so hog-tied by tonic-dominant prejudice that one can't hear it for what it is."

But on their examination papers—in answer to the question "Discuss the following: (a) Gesualdo . . ."—the students who haven't heard a note of his music will nevertheless write: "His extreme chromaticism was not based on clear harmonic perception and hence not fully absorbed by the main stream of development. The frightful, ragged, unvocal writing in his madrigals makes their performance by a vocal ensemble well-nigh impossible."

May 31, 1947

"Now I understand: what Gertrude Stein was writing all the time with those repetitions was opera librettos!" exclaimed

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my companion at a performance of Virgil Thomson's *The Mother of Us All*. Opera librettos for Virgil Thomson, I would say. In his new work he treats the text in the same unique way as in *Four Saints in Three Acts*, and achieves similar delightful and moving results.

The words of *The Mother of Us All* have less poetic imagery and music, and more rational meaning—on the one hand the meaning of a sentence that is amusingly discontinuous and isolated in its context, like "He digged a pit; he digged it deep; he digged it for his brother," stated by a group of men who march across the stage during the political rally; on the other hand the meaning of a longer train of thought like Jo Loiterer's explanation of how to be funny, or Susan B. Anthony's discourse on the nature of man, with its wonderful insights. But Thomson's method is the same—by which I don't mean that he uses it mechanically; on the contrary, one is delighted by the attentiveness and freshness of attack at moment after moment that produce, so simply and often artlessly, the results that are so witty, so touching, so grand.

In addition there was the pleasure from the beautiful performance staged by John Taras and conducted by Otto Luening, with costumes and sets by Paul du Pont—as part of the third annual festival of contemporary American music at Columbia University.

As for the opera of last year's festival, Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Medium*, which I heard only recently, it brings to mind Shaw's characterization of Boito's *Mefistofele* as a mere adaptation of existing musical resources to the purposes of his libretto. A lot of newly composed music can be described in that way—which amounts to saying that in a real sense it is not newly composed at all. And Menotti's opera is, to my ears, an adaptation of the stock devices of operatic music of various styles to the needs of a play of the kind one accepts as valid only in the opera house. It is, in addition, a rather extraordinary example of the theatrical effectiveness which a sense for the theater can

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achieve with poor materials: the play as such is not a good play; the music as such is not good music; but each is well-contrived for the other in a combination that is extremely effective. And the work gains by the excellent performance staged by the composer and conducted by Emanuel Balaban, with costumes and set by Horace Armistead. The curtain-raiser, *The Telephone*, a sort of expanded revue-sketch, is amusing.

One admires Laszlo Halasz's enterprise; but one wishes it were guided by the discrimination that would prevent the waste of a production of rubbish like Giordano's *Andrea Chenier*. And one wishes also that it were restrained by a sense of reality—of the realities of New York City Center that make it impossible to stage a work like Strauss's *Salome* properly (I am assuming the limitations of the City Center stage were responsible for the set that lacked the cistern from which Jokanaan should ascend and into which he should descend again, and from which the arm of the executioner should thrust the silver charger with Jokanaan's head). The musical performance conducted by Mr. Halasz seemed to me excellent; but I speak as one who doesn't know the score; and I therefore mention one German conductor's opinion that the performance was "ohful: the orchestra was sometimes five bars separated from the voice." But this conductor once said of a Toscanini performance of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2—the one with the impossibly high trumpet part—that "fifty prozent was left out, twenty-five prozent was falsch, and the rest was all right"; and I am inclined, therefore, to trust my own impression of the performance of *Salome*.

June 14, 28, 1947

E. M. Forster's address at the recent Harvard Symposium of Music Criticism^{39a}—of which I saw the text—was full of sharp insights, formulated with subtlety and wit, which I would expect to be completely out of the aesthetic and intellectual worlds of some of the other participants. Considering what the Downeses

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and Langs at the symposium are usually concerned with in their discussion of a work of art, I can't imagine them even knowing what Forster was talking about—to say nothing of appreciating its deadly force—when, describing the two aims of criticism, he said: “The first and the more important is aesthetic. It considers the object in itself, as an entity, and tells us what it can about its life. The second aim is subsidiary; the relation of the object to the rest of the world.” This means consideration of “the conditions under which the work of art was composed, the influences which formed it (criticism adores influences), the influence it has exercised on subsequent works, prenatal possibilities”—much of which he conceded to be valuable, “but what meanwhile has become of Monteverdi's *Vespers*, or the Great Mosque at Delhi, or *The Frogs* of Aristophanes, or any other work which you happen to have in mind?” If we wheel up to the work of art even the best aesthetic theory “and apply it with its measuring rods and pliers and forceps . . . it doesn't work, the two universes have not even collided”; on the other hand, “if criticism strays from her central aesthetic quest to influences and psychological and historical considerations . . . contact is established. But no longer with a work of art.”

And in fact Downes's article in the *Times* after the symposium confirmed my surmise that he hadn't understood what Forster's address was about. As for Lang, the confirmation was provided in a letter about the symposium from a young reader at Harvard. “Lang began with the statement that music criticism is an art, not a science, and a critic must convey an illusion of the life in the music and the love he bears for it—an obvious bow to Forster. Then, in logical sequence, our critics were therefore bad because they were not musicians, they couldn't read score, they didn't know the literature of music or about music: for instance a music critic in New York who spent most of his time railing at music scholars had only a few weeks earlier discovered the famous de la Laurencie, an important French music scholar whom everybody knows; and he hadn't discovered him by him-

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self, but through a correspondent." And my reader comments: "Doubtless his inaccuracy about the whole musical scene is as scandalous as his misreading of your article."*

Lang's inaccuracy about the entire musical scene is shocking—and the more so for being, probably, unintended. It is the inaccuracy of a man who—taking off from a statement about the critic's function being to convey an illusion of the life in a piece of music, and addressing an audience which includes a number of critics who are not the less undistinguished for having a professional musical education and the ability to read score—is not deterred by all this from hurling forth his usual contentions about criticism being bad because the critics are not musicians, can't read score, and so on. In short, a man with a muddled mind. A man with a muddled mind which enables him first to suppress the essential part of an argument of Ernest Newman and misrepresent the part he answers, and then to see in a demonstration of this shocking inaccuracy only a "railing at music scholars." Or to scream²⁹ in the *American Scholar* once against the type of music criticism concerned with "the amorous adventures of singers and virtuosi" which "in our day . . . appears in so-called biographies (cf. Ernest Newman's *Liszt*)", and himself to publish in the *Saturday Review of Literature* recently a vulgar account of Liszt's amorous adventures. A man with a muddled, inaccurate mind, whose job at a great university is to teach students in musico-historical research rigor and accuracy.

July 5, 1947

At twenty I was as impressed by the late Paul Rosenfeld's *Musical Portraits*⁴⁸ as most people were; but rereading it at thirty I could see that it was only a fancy rephrasing of generally ac-

* [1948] The article Lang referred to was concerned with the mispractices of the German school of musicologists, among whom Lang's attitudes and method of operation place him. I described his tactics with Ernest Newman's *Bombastes Furioso*—of suppressing the essential part of Newman's argument and misrepresenting the rest [see p. 352]; and additional material was provided in a letter from a scholarly young correspondent, who also described enthusi-

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cepted estimates; and what caused me to reread it and check my earlier impression was the conviction I had arrived at by this time that he did not really have the critical perception he pretended to in his writing. What little I saw of the writing after that always confirmed this opinion; and just recently it was confirmed again by his review of the program given by the American Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House in the spring of 1937, which I found in an old issue of the *New Republic*.

The program consisted of three ballets of Balanchine with musical scores by Stravinsky: two of Balanchine's greatest works, *Apollo* and *Le Baiser de la fée*, the second with one of Stravinsky's finest and most moving scores, and *The Card Party*. And Rosenfeld wrote that the third ballet's "appearance of relatively colossal magnitude was somewhat illusory, flowing to a distinct degree from the fact of its companions' puniness: a puniness the consequence of wooden choreography combined in one case with a vital if languidly classical score, and in the other with an interminable fantasia on themes of Tchaikovsky's. . . . The choreography of *Apollo* was utterly empty of poetry, effortful, and essentially at variance with the music. If that of *Le Baiser* was less antagonistic to its score, it was largely for the reason that that composition itself is Stravinsky's feeblest."

On the other hand, W. J. Turner, who died in England last winter, was the most distinguished music critic of our time. An artist, a poet himself, he wrote about the qualities of Mozart's music, which are so difficult to describe, with a poet's penetration and precision of statement; and he had those illuminating insights which constitute the sole value of a critic's writing and are to be found in the writing of so few critics.

astically his discovery of the contrasting excellences of a French musicologist named de la Laurencie. There was no reason for anyone but a scholar to know about de la Laurencie; and there still hasn't been any occasion for me to read him.

August 16, 1947

Dame Ethel Smyth's *Impressions That Remained*,⁵⁵ originally published in 1919, is the first instalment of the memoirs of the famous woman composer who died in 1944. Born in 1858, one of the typical large family of an English major-general who was antagonistic to her musical inclinations, she went to study music in Leipzig. There her remarkable personal qualities won her the intimate friendship of the families who dominated the musical life of the city, including the Herzogenbergs, those friends of Brahms who are always mentioned in program-notes, and in whose home in fact she met Brahms and got to know him well enough to write a chapter on him that is better than any of the full-dress biographies. Nor was it, of course, only Brahms but almost all the musical greats of the time—Clara Schumann, Joachim, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Rubinstein, Levi—that she heard, met, observed, and describes.

Nor is it only musical folk that she writes about with such keen perception, humor, and verve. The book begins with delightful chapters about her family—her mother, for example, whose “own point of view tended to obscure that of the other person—so much so that we often chaffed her about her style of relating a conversation: ‘So he said something or other, and I said *not at all*, that’s where you’re quite wrong. . . .’” Later there are equally fine chapters on her English friends. And throughout there are the observations on music of the caliber of her remark about Wagner’s “having written operas the length of which always seemed to me artistically arrogant—a wilful ignoring of the limits set by nature to human receptivity. But Wagner is, among other things, the greatest hypnotizer the world has ever seen, and for the hypnotized time does not exist.”

In striking contrast to all this sharpness of perception, vivacity of mind, and vitality of literary style is the colorlessness of Bruno Walter’s mind, the flabbiness of his translated writing in his autobiography, *Theme and Variations*.⁶⁴ The mere factual rec-

AUGUST 30, 1947

ord which it offers is interesting at times, as are the long discussions of Mahler's methods and results, the briefer ones of other conductors' and singers' and players' performances. But even the factual record is often sketchy, cloudy, and incomplete; for men like Walter have had experiences which could provide fascinating material for a book, but which they consider it necessary to be tactful about; and Walter is excessively tactful: there is, for example, not a word about Furtwängler—his performances before 1933, his behavior after 1933, about which Walter undoubtedly has opinions.

Tact may be the right word for Szigeti's omission of Arthur Judson from his *With Strings Attached*; ⁵⁷ but a less pleasant word would have to be used for his inclusions in that chaos of pretentious "reminiscences and reflections"—the profusion of names dragged in for a purpose. Thus, "Kreisler was playing a concerto by Mozart (that 'supreme internationalist and equalitarian in art,' as Olin Downes felicitously put it) . . ."

August 30, 1947

Moses Smith's *Koussevitzky* ⁵⁴ is the biography that Koussevitzky tried to suppress. On the other hand the Harvard University Press announcement of Dr. Hugo Leichtentritt's *Serge Koussevitzky, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the New American Music* ⁵⁵ informed me that when the book was being considered Koussevitzky wrote: "I personally believe that Dr. Leichtentritt is one of the few outstanding musicologists of our day, and his book, based on long experience and direct contact with the musical life of this country, will prove of great interest. . . . It would give me much pleasure to see it published by you."

Actually the "long experience and direct contact with the musical life of this country" is that of a German who came here after 1933, and whose knowledge and opinions of much of the music played by Koussevitzky in his earlier years and by the Boston Symphony even before that—and also of what other orchestras and conductors had done for American composers—are

only such as could be acquired from the volumes of Boston Symphony program-notes and press-clippings. Furthermore, the scholarship of this "outstanding musicologist" is as little worthy of respect in this book as it was in his article on criticism in the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*:² there, for example, he had newspaper criticism of music beginning with Hanslick, here he has "modern conducting . . . stemming from Wagner"—omitting in each case the work of Berlioz. Moreover, he finds it as easy to invent whatever he needs for his purpose as some of his fellow-scholars do: for example—to show how logical the engagement of Koussevitzky was—the statements that "after the death of Nikisch he had a greater international prestige than any other contemporary conductor," that "the Great War had finished the era of German predominance in the best American orchestras," and that the eminent German conductors had no desire to come here—the truth being that less had been heard here of Koussevitzky than of Furtwängler and Bruno Walter (to say nothing of Toscanini), and that not only were Walter brought over by the New York Symphony in 1923 and Furtwängler by the New York Philharmonic during Koussevitzky's first season, but Mengelberg was with the Philharmonic, Reiner with the Cincinnati Symphony, and Klemperer was brought over by the New York Symphony.

In addition, when Leichtentritt writes about the music he does know from performance or from the score, it is with the lack of critical discernment and aesthetic good sense that is characteristic of these scholars, and that produces passages like this one about Copland's *Billy the Kid*: "A naive foreigner . . . might ask whether this is a typically American story, and what music has to do with it. Evidently Copland asked himself the same questions, and evidently he did find something typically American in this tale and something fit for musical treatment. As a musician, Copland is concerned with Americanism in its various phases, but also with the dignity of the art of music. Yet in this particular case, one may suspect that commercial

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reasons prompted him to neglect the dignity of music, as he is otherwise not a specialist in stories appealing to the instincts of the prize ring."

And about Koussevitzky himself as artist and educator, finally, Leichtentritt writes with the factual accuracy and critical judgment of a corporation publicity director writing about the talents and achievements of the corporation's president: in whatever Koussevitzky has done as a musician he has been unfailingly and brilliantly right, even where he has been criticized as wrong, and for reasons and principles newly invented to meet the criticisms; in whatever he has said as an educator and propagandist in music he has been profound and prophetic.

Altogether the book is, in fact, what a corporation publicity director would turn out about the corporation and its president, dressed up in pretensions to scholarship. It is, then, a book one can understand a Koussevitzky getting pleasure from seeing published, but not a Harvard University Press publishing.

September 6, 1947

If Koussevitzky could be pleased by publication of the sickening stuff that Dr. Leichtentritt wrote about him, he would be displeased by publication of Moses Smith's accurate history and discriminating appraisal of his career and achievements. The Koussevitzky sycophants, presumably echoing Koussevitzky himself, accused Smith of malicious slanders. Actually there is a detail here and there in which malice can be detected; but it is the occasional slight malice of someone who is essentially friendly—the irresistible revenge for the long-endured attitudes and behavior exemplified by Koussevitzky's court action to suppress a book that was critical as well as appreciative. Also it shows itself only in a minor detail, never in a large matter. Also it never expresses itself in falsehood—and I won't complain of ill-will that uses only truth for its purpose.

If Smith describes weaknesses in the man, limitations in the conductor, flaws in the musician, they are enormously outweighed

by all that he finds to admire and praise. And if, after all that Smith says about Koussevitzky's service to composers of his and our own time, both in Europe and here, he adds that the record is not perfect—that the choices of new music to play have often been arbitrary and impulsive, with many instances of undeserved neglect, and that in the case of Americans it gradually became clear that "his principal interest was in youth, on whose behalf he tended to neglect youth's elders," that "he was interested also in newness for its own sake and for the attention novelty would attract to him," so that "a second performance of the . . . work might never materialize, unless it was by one of his favorite coterie"—Smith is not being malicious, for he points out that in all this "Koussevitzky was hardly exceptional among conductors in America"; he is merely stating what must be stated to complete the factual record.

But in the words of Virgil Thomson, whose article on the subject was one of his most brilliant performances, "all great artists loathe criticism. They do; they really do. What they want, what they need, what they live on, as Gertrude Stein so rightly said, is praise. They can never get enough of it. And sometimes, when they have come to be really powerful in the world, they take the attitude that anything else is libel and should be suppressed." Koussevitzky had complained of possible "irreparable injury"—which led Thomson to comment that "it is the big boys, the great big boys whom nothing could harm, that squawk the loudest."

One final point: From Smith's book one learns how the fortune of Koussevitzky's second wife made possible for him not only the career of conductor but the life of a grand seigneur. Those are the facts; what follows is possible interpretation of those facts. That is, I am led to wonder whether one could say that his wife's fortune made it possible for a man who had suffered poverty, rebuffs, humiliations to compensate himself emotionally for those experiences by bestowing largesse on composers, conductors, instrumentalists, singers, critics, and all the rest. And whether one could say that his theory of the conduc-

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tor's function, which makes it his right and duty to alter the scores of dead composers and to do the same even with those of living composers, is an extension of that pretentious behavior for emotional compensation. And that the spouting of portentous balderdash at Tanglewood is another such extension.

September 13, 1947

In *Two Worlds of Music*²¹ Berta Geissmar writes about the years in which she was close friend, secretary, and adviser to Furtwängler and manager of the Berlin Philharmonic, until she was forced out of her positions by the Nazis and had to leave Germany; and about her subsequent experiences as secretary to Beecham and manager of the London Philharmonic. The book is not without interesting details, especially in the portion about Beecham; but about Furtwängler it is sketchy, incomplete, idolatrous, and worthless, since it creates a picture of someone with no resemblance to the flawed musician and flawed human being that Furtwängler is by the testimony of more reliable witnesses, including himself.

The book is an amazing revelation of the lack of a sense of political morality on the part of its three chief characters—Furtwängler, Beecham, and Dr. Geissmar—in the situations in which they found or placed themselves: on the part of Furtwängler in staying in Germany, especially when there could no longer be any pretense that he might be able to get the Nazis to change their policies, or could benefit anyone but himself; on the part of Beecham in going to Germany to conduct; on the part of Dr. Geissmar in going back to Germany to arrange Beecham's appearances there and to engage German artists for Covent Garden (Beecham got amusement from ramming her down the Nazis' throats; she got satisfaction from it). Their excuse was that they were acting in accordance with their contention that art must be kept non-political—in disregard of the political use the Nazis made of Furtwängler's submission after his resignation, and of Beecham's visits. And actually Beecham yielded to

the request that he omit a Mendelssohn symphony from the programs of the London Philharmonic on its German tour—as Furtwängler yielded to similar German pressure not to play a Mendelssohn symphony in Budapest.

Lacking a sense of political morality, Dr. Geissmar can describe incidents like the one of Beecham and the Mendelssohn symphony without any realization of how damaging they are. Thus she writes that when, in February, 1934, the Italian ambassador transmitted the request for a tour of Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic in Italy in April, “I told him that his request came too late. But he was so insistent that I finally promised to do my best, provided . . . that after upsetting our plans he would at least arrange an audience for Furtwängler with Mussolini in Rome. I did my work, Cerruti did his. . . . The day after the first concert Furtwängler had an audience with Il Duce. . . . The second concert was sold out. Mussolini and his daughter Edda occupied a box. . . . Furtwängler was given an Italian decoration of the highest order the country could bestow on an artist.” And while the German Nazis in Rome reported home only a complaint about the non-Aryan members of the orchestra, “the German Ambassador, von Hassell . . . reported to the German Foreign Office, emphasizing the great success of the tour, particularly in view of the obviously hostile feeling of the Italians towards the Nazis.”

Yet, instead of being pleased the authorities in Berlin, including Goebbels, were furious—because the tour had been arranged by her. “That their ultimate end had been accomplished did not matter: they had not accomplished it themselves.” And it is clear that she reports all this without any realization that she is claiming credit for success in, and complaining of Nazi ingratitude for, an involvement of art with politics, and describing actions by Furtwängler as damning as anything he did in Germany—as, for example, his first appearance after his submission, in April 1935, at a *Winterhilfe* benefit concert attended by Hitler and the entire government, and the famous cordial hand-

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shake with Hitler at that concert, which Dr. Geissmar rightly calls a "symbolic gesture."

November 8, 1947

Even among the best ensemble pianists Franz Rupp is outstanding. What he creates around someone's playing or singing—a progression excitingly beautiful as playing of the piano, and exciting also in its continuous musical life, the musical continuity from one sound to the next—places him among the greats of our musical world. It represents gifts of the magnitude of theirs—not only the specific gift for ensemble performance, but gifts for the piano and for music which he has devoted, all these years, to creating musical life around the playing or singing of someone else. When he has used them long enough in the creation of autonomous musical life in performances of his own, his performance of Schubert's great posthumous A Major Sonata will have not only the over-all coherence of sections that it had in Town Hall recently, but the unfailing musical continuity from every sound to the next that it did not have; and the achievement of this musical continuity will bring with it the achievement of the finer gradations of tone that were lacking in that recent performance. I feel able to predict all this because he achieved it in smaller works—in Chopin's F minor Ballade, which he played with beautiful lyricism and plasticity (but without the customary mannered distortion of phrase), and built up to a hair-raising climax; and in exquisitely colored performances of Debussy's *Soirée dans Grenade* and *Reflets dans l'eau*.

November 22, 1947

A new edition of Professor Edward J. Dent's *Mozart's Operas*¹⁸ has provided me with the occasion to read at last a book that I have long intended to read, and to discover that it is one of the great books on music. Like Tovey's writings it is the product

of a scholarship that works hand in hand with aesthetic insight—the scholarship providing knowledge of Mozart's materials, problems, and methods with each opera; the aesthetic insight illuminating the completed work of art. And if it is without Tovey's flashing brilliance it is also free of the epigrammatic obscurities that Tovey's pyrotechnics of thought and statement sometimes result in—which is to say that it is written with an urbanity and clarity that make the reading of it a delight.

November 29, 1947

Some of the kind of music by Stravinsky in which I used to hear only "expertly contrived aridity and ugliness" I have recently begun to find interesting and enjoyable—and nobody could be more surprised at this than myself. Trying to account for it I think that one of the factors was the Balanchine choreography for *Danses Concertantes* which was like the additional line of counterpoint that completes a musical texture and gives it the significance it lacked without such completion:* when I heard another work I heard it with what such a Balanchine counterpoint would have imparted to it. Another factor was the score of *Le Baiser de la fée*, which, even without what Balanchine imparted to it, had seemed to me years ago to be an unusually beautiful result of Stravinskian manipulation of materials borrowed from other composers: now I was struck not only by the beauty of what Stravinsky contrived with Tchaikovsky's materials, but with its direct expressiveness, something almost unique in Stravinsky's music, which I could recall in only

* [1948] In general, Balanchine's feeling for the music he is working with produces a sequence of movement which combines with the music like an added counterpoint—movement and music then enlarging and intensifying each other's meaning and quality. The *Andante* of *Concerto Barocco* provides an outstanding example of this in the lovely melody, building up and releasing its phraseological and emotional tensions in its never-pausing flow, and the complementing, enriching, intensifying flow of exciting movement with its built-up and released tensions—with a cumulative impact, in the end, like that of the long flow of calm melody over agitated accompaniment in the *Andante* of Mozart's Piano Concerto K.467.

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one other work, *The Firebird*; and I was fascinated by the way the beautiful and expressive details were contrived—which is to say by the operation of Stravinsky's mind. It was this operation of his mind that I began to be aware of, interested, fascinated, and amused by, in the ostinato figures and rhythms, the perverse accents, the distorted melodies, the strident harmonies and sonorities in *Dances Concertantes*, the *Symphony in Three Movements*, and now the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto* recorded by Stravinsky with a chamber orchestra headed by Alexander Schneider for Keynote.

November 8, December 6, 1947

It is evident from Leonard Bernstein's conducting movements that he has watched and learned from Koussevitzky; and it seems to me that he would do well now to watch and learn from Toscanini. What he might learn is to do no more than he needs for what he wants. And what led me to this thought was his conducting of the New York City Symphony in a performance of Beethoven's Second, which struck me at times as being far in excess of what was needed. The orchestra might be moving along with a clear tendency that required only a confirming indication—instead of which he suddenly wound himself into a Koussevitzkian paroxysm—and this to achieve a crescendo from *p* to *mf*. What happened in such a case was that the orchestra disregarded the paroxysm and produced the *mf* it was supposed to produce—which is to say that at that moment Bernstein was not really conducting the orchestra but carrying on a performance of his own.

But at another concert Bernstein demonstrated the powers required to get a by no means first-rate orchestra through a work as difficult as Stravinsky's *Scènes de ballet*, and to produce with this orchestra and the brilliant Tossy Spivakovsky a superbly assured performance of Stravinsky's Violin Concerto; and there was also an excellent performance of Piston's Violin Concerto with Hugo Kolberg. I have recently begun to get some enjoy-

ment from certain of Stravinsky's later works that I didn't use to get; and I got it from occasional details in these two; but I still didn't care for them in their entirety. As for the Piston, I found the first movement engaging for once, but the rest just the usual meaningless rattle and clatter.

Copland's *Statements*, at another concert, did not seem to me worth the trouble Bernstein had given himself with it; and Gershwin's *An American in Paris* got an over-playing of detail that destroyed the continuity and effect of the work as a whole.

As for Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, the participants in the performance gave me the impression of considering themselves engaged in an especially noble activity that would wash them clean—like the participants in the first performance of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth. And for the audience Blitzstein's treatment of his subject—life in a steel town during a union drive—on the theatrical level of *Nellie the Beautiful Cloak Model* apparently constituted Truth in profoundly moving dramatic terms. I find all this as depressing as the fact that other people are impressed by Upton Close or Westbrook Pegler—to say nothing of Galen Drake or Arthur Godfrey. There is more to say about Blitzstein's work, but it will have to wait; and I am hoping that Wolcott Gibbs will do the job with its ideas and incidents and words that he did with those of *Allegro*, and save me the trouble.*

January 10, 1948

In his superb book on Mozart's operas Professor Dent points out how unfortunate it is that there are so few opportunities to see *Idomeneo* on the stage, since without knowledge of this opera "there can be no complete understanding of Mozart's other works, [and] especially of his works for the theater." If I call his book superb it is because of the insight—not shared by our own academics—which enables him to perceive that "the theater is the sphere in which Mozart is most completely him-

*The unpredictable Mr. Gibbs found the Blitzstein work "still marvelously funny on the level of simple comedy."

self; his concert works—concertos, symphonies, quartets, and sonatas—are all fundamentally evocations of the theater.” And we have to know *Idomeneo* because this work which he wrote at the age of twenty-five is the mature Mozart’s first and last *opera seria*, and as such—with its nobility and grandeur, its intense seriousness, its “monumental strength and white heat of passion” that we do not find in the later operas—provides the standard which enables us to perceive that the later works are not “grand operas” at all.

These general observations and Professor Dent’s further comments on particular details led me to go up to Boston for the New England Opera Theater’s repetition of the *Idomeneo* that Boris Goldovsky arranged and produced at the Berkshire Festival last summer, and to hear for myself the amazing things Mozart put into the score. Such things as the grandly impassioned gestures with which the overture begins, the continuing urgency of its so-called second subject in A minor, the breathtaking shift to C major; the powerfully expressive detail with which the orchestra points up the recitatives; the noble style of the arias; the dramatic use of coloratura style—including that stroke of genius at the end of Electra’s final aria, the descending staccato scale which becomes the laughter of a demented creature. Or the quartet, in which, in Dent’s words, “Electra’s fury, Idomeneo’s despair, the tender resignation of the youthful lovers, all find utterance . . . now sharply individualized, now grouped in contrasting pairs, now joining all together in the united expression of that experience fundamental to tragedy, the sense of oppression by mysterious powers beyond human control”; in which, moreover, “the strictly symmetrical form gives the movement its classic dignity, and the necessity of considering the compass of different voices leads to modulations of startling expressive power”; and which ends with another master-stroke—Idamante alone, after the last chord of the four characters, repeating his opening statement, which is completed by the orchestra. Or finally, the chorus *O voto tremendo!*, which has the power of the trio of Don Giovanni,

Leporello, and the dying Commendatore in the opening scene of *Don Giovanni*.

As the director of an "opera theater" Mr. Goldovsky was concerned with making the production dramatically clear and convincing. It was for this end that he made a necessary and skillful revision of the work by means of cutting and rearrangement—though I would have cut a little less. I presume that it was for this end, also, that he used an English translation which some members of the audience criticized on literary grounds—my own reaction being that I would have preferred an English synopsis of the action in the program and the remoteness of the foreign language in the performance. And he seems to have decided against anything so unrealistic as a singer standing in one place while singing an aria; for the singers sang their arias in a state of absurdly perpetual motion, the most ludicrous example being Paula Lenchner, the Electra, in the get-up of a femme fatale lurching darkly now a dozen steps to the right and now a dozen steps to the left, and the outstanding exception being Anne Bollinger, the Idamante, who sang with repose and economy of gesture made impressive by personal force. Added to this was the absurdity of some of the things the chorus did in ridiculous costumes and without wigs to conceal the various incongruous present-day hair-dos.

Actually, in the end, what made the production convincing was the performance of the music. Mr. Goldovsky had only young singers for his principals—Nancy Trickey as Ilia, Joseph Laderoute as Idomeneo, Frank Guarrera as Arbaces, in addition to those I have mentioned—but he had been able to train them to sing their parts very creditably. And though he had not been able to rehearse them sufficiently with the orchestra to achieve the precise gearing of singing with playing—or even the precise gearing of kettledrums with the rest of the orchestra—nevertheless the performance gave enough effect to the music to move the audience to enthusiastic applause and me to this expression of gratitude for Mr. Goldovsky's enterprise, courage, and achievement.

March 27, 1948

"A master pianist and a master musician," was Virgil Thomson's description of Webster Aitken a couple of years ago; and it is the best description of Aitken's recent Town Hall performances of Charles Ives's four transcriptions from his *Emerson*, Elliot Carter's Sonata, Menotti's Ricercare and Toccata, and Beethoven's Sonata Opus 111. One marveled at the mastery which produced, with such precision, clarity, and beauty, the sounds of these works that are so difficult to produce, and gave these sounds order, shape, direction in a clear-textured, unfailingly continuous musical progression—which, in short, made of each work something completely achieved on the piano and as a piece of music.

I spoke, a couple of weeks ago, of Schnabel's performance of Beethoven's Opus 111 as the definitive performance even with its technical and expressive flaws—the unprecise, confused execution of difficult passage-work, the excessive intensity and consequent distortion of phrase in the early variations of the second movement. When I say that Aitken produced something completely achieved I mean that there were no excesses and distortions, but instead a shaping of each movement with absolute consistency throughout, and that every detail in this shaping was produced with absolute accuracy—the accuracy that enabled him to give musical outline to passages (e.g., Variation 3) which were mere noise in Schnabel's performance. Also—and most important—I mean that what Aitken achieved was a performance entirely different from Schnabel's—without, for one thing, Schnabel's spaciously and philosophically meditative treatment of some passages—which in its own dramatic and grand style gave wonderfully impressive effect to the work.

Ives's music made no sense to me—not the American sense that some attribute to his music, nor the sense about Emerson that Ives attributes to this piece, nor any other sense that music is capable of conveying. Carter's sonata would, I thought, more accurately be called a toccata; for the player's fingers are set

going and kept going in a non-expressive exploitation of the resources of the piano, which one listens to with a non-emotional awareness of what is happening and of the highly developed competence and originality that are at work in it. There was no such originality in Menotti's piece; but it is the best of his music that I have heard and was especially enjoyable after the thirty-five minutes of Ives and Carter and played with musically directed technical brilliance like Aitken's.

From Articles on the Ballet 1944-1947

Balanchine, for me, stands out among choreographers—even among the best choreographers—in the way Picasso stands out among even the best painters: by the mere power in manipulation of his medium, the powers of the mind and imagination that reveal themselves in the constant development and originality of his invention, its inexhaustible fertility, and in Balanchine's case the additional powers which this invention reveals in relation to music, drama, and theater. They make Balanchine, it seems to me, an artist of the same magnitude as Picasso, the only one I can think of now working in any of the arts. He is, I would say, even more disciplined in the exercise of his powers than Picasso: the originality, no matter how astounding, always remains part of the continuous development; a work as singular as *Danses Concertantes* is only a special use of the permanent but developing elements of the idiom and style of all the works.

There are people who object that the movements of classic ballet don't mean anything. Certainly those ballet movements, like any other plastic materials—for example, the materials of formal music—can be made to mean nothing. But as certainly they can be made to have the "eloquence of pure form." And some of the most exciting experiences of this eloquence that I have had have been those offered by the classic ballets which Balanchine has created in recent years: *Concerto Barocco*, *Ballet Imperial*, *Danses Concertantes*, *Mozartiana*, *The Four Temperaments*. This series is like the series of Mozart's piano con-

certos: the creative mind and personality, the language and style in which these express themselves, the formula which they fill out with the language and style—these are always the same; but the completed forms are constantly new and fascinating; and like Mozart's musical forms they fascinate and delight one with the play of mind and wit in the endlessly inventive manipulation of the formal elements.

No less fascinating, on the other hand, are the works in which Balanchine's choreographic invention is the medium for his extraordinary dramatic imagination and feeling for the theater. In *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* that imagination and theatrical sense produce delightful comedy; in *Le Baiser* we get their full range—in scenes which begin with radiant gaiety and humor and end with dark, terrifying violence. We also get wonderful examples of how that imagination uses traditional ballet materials and situations. I have spoken more than once of the new thing that Balanchine makes in each ballet of the movements and poses of the pas de deux of ballerina and male dancer: the seduction in *Le Fils prodigue*; the strange, ominous, menacing *Hand of Fate* episode in *Cotillon*; the exquisite, touching expression of the emotions of youthful love in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. In *Le Baiser de la fée* there is the tender, playful pas de deux of the boy and his bride; there is, on the other hand, the terrifyingly violent pas de deux in which the fairy takes possession of the boy at the end of the village scene. And this one is followed by a powerful stroke of the *fantaisie Balanchine* that is a further manifestation of Balanchine's dramatic imagination and theatrical sense: the fairy stands behind the limp body of the boy, her right arm extended forward over his shoulder to point out the direction he must go, and gives him a push that impels him forward a few steps; he stops, she moves up behind him with extended right arm that travels past his head to point before him, and gives him another push; again he stops, again she moves up behind him with extended right arm that points ahead, and gives him another push; this

impels him off the stage, she follows him off with extended right arm pointing ahead, and the curtain falls.

And in *The Night Shadow* the climax is a supreme stroke of *fantaisie Balanchine*—the pas de deux of the poet's encounter with the somnambulist, in which his way first of expressing his wonder, then of attempting to establish contact with her mind, is to experiment with her moving body, to control its motion—to stop it, to send it now in this direction now in that, to spin it, to grasp the candle in her hand and swing her now this way now that. The episode has terrific impact—from its originality both as dance and as theater invention, from the sudden simplicity and quiet after all the animated intricacy, from Danilova's concentration and intensity in her exquisitely limpid flow of movement.

In these new works the Monte Carlo offers one group of the greatest things one can see in ballet; and another group is the performances of old classics in which Danilova appears: the company's beautiful performance of *Coppelia*, which she makes enchanting; the performances of *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* which, when she appears in them, she enriches with an art that grows ever more wonderful—this developing art being what age gives her while it takes away mere stamina. It is the same thing as has happened in the singing of Lotte Lehmann; and this suggests a further analogy: Danilova's classic dancing is, in relation to Markova's, as Lehmann's lieder singing is in relation to Elisabeth Schumann's. That is, the line that is so pure in Markova's *Swan Lake* or *Nutcracker* performance is suffused with personal warmth and radiance and graciousness in Danilova's.

And still another musical analogy suggests itself. In addition to the expressive force, the poignancy, the loveliness, and everything else that makes a work of Mozart wonderful, there are the ways the things happen, the ways they come into existence, the precise way, for example, a woodwind adds itself to strings at a certain point. These are the unobtrusive, effortless, inevitable manifestations of extraordinary human powers; and under

the impact of their succession it is sometimes difficult to keep from crying out in excitement and delight. The same thing is true of the succession of movements in the *Andante* of Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco*. And it is true of the succession of movements in Danilova's *Nutcracker* performance.

In a note in the program the Monte Carlo management has declared itself "an organization free from any commercial influences, [viewing] our mission only as a service to the great public." That being so, I should like to point out one service which I think it ought to perform for that public. The audiences at the City Center have appeared to enjoy *Danses Concertantes* and *Mozartiana*; but they also have enjoyed *Red Poppy* and *Scheherazade* and *Frankie and Johnny*; and I think that where it is dealing with an uncritical public which enjoys good and bad equally, the Monte Carlo management will best serve that public by giving it only good ballets to enjoy, and in this way cultivating in it a taste for the good which will develop into the good taste that will enable it to discriminate between good and bad on its own.

So with performance. The audiences at the City Center have applauded the good performances, but also the bad; they have applauded the *Pas de deux* of Danilova and Franklin, but also the *Bluebird* of Krassovska and Danielian; and indeed they have on occasion applauded bad more thunderously than good: in a *Pas de deux classique* I saw last fall there was Danilova making one movement after another that took one's breath away with its assured, unobtrusively achieved perfection and grace, there was Danielian hurling himself around with ostentatious violence, and there was the audience applauding Danilova moderately now and then after something obviously difficult, but roaring its answer to Danielian's every exhibitionistic appeal for applause, and doing the same thing at their individual curtain calls. And here again I think the management should give its audiences only good performances to enjoy, and in this way cultivate in them the taste and discrimination they now lack.

.Postscript 1948

Considering the succession of Balanchine's works from his first classic ballet, *Apollo* (1928), in which, as Edwin Denby once described it, the story of Apollo and the muses is told "in the concrete terms of classic dancing, in a series of episodes of rising power and brilliance" whose "lyric or forceful climaxes . . . are effects of dance continuity, dance rhythm and dance architecture," and which "create a sustained . . . impression of the grandness of man's creative genius," to his most recent dramatic ballet, *Orpheus* (1948), in which the story of the Orpheus myth is realized in dramatically imaginative dance terms that achieve the kind of powerful concentration of violence and intensity into classic simplicity that Mozart's music does; considering other works in that succession besides the ones I have already mentioned—*Le Fils prodigue* and *Le Bal* (1929), *Concurrence* and *Cotillon* (1932), the recent *Sinfonie Concertante*, *Divertimento*, *Theme and Variations*, *Symphony in C*, and *The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*; considering what powers are revealed in any one of them, and what powers they testify to in their succession—considering all this, I have found that Balanchine stands out, for me, above any living creative artist I can think of.

ADDITIONAL BOOK REVIEWS

June 20, 1928

*ANTHEIL, AND THE TREATISE ON HARMONY,
WITH SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.* By Ezra Pound.
Chicago: Pascal Covici, 1927.

Mr. Pound's method is like the one which he describes as Wagner's, "which is not dissimilar from that of the Foire de Neuilly, i.e., you confuse the spectator by smacking as many of his senses as possible at every possible moment; this prevents his noting anything with unusual lucidity, but you may fluster or excite him to the point of making him receptive; i.e., you may slip over an emotion, or you may sell him a rubber doll or a new cake of glass-mender during the hurly-burly." In his book, too, there is a ceaseless hurly-burly of irrelevancies, pedantries, esoteric sarcasms, and prose affectations, the while essential things are not lucidly or adequately stated but only alluded to as though they had been so stated. It conveys the impression of a book intended for those who already understand, or, one might say, for those with whom Mr. Pound has a private understanding. Chief among these is George Antheil, with whom Mr. Pound carries on a mutually satisfying conversation for a time. Others will conclude, from what little they can understand, that even this was not worth the trouble they gave themselves over the book.

"The element most grossly omitted from treatises on harmony up to the present is the element of TIME. The question of the time-interval that must elapse between one sound and another if the two sounds are to produce a pleasing consonance or an *interesting* relation, has been avoided." One can answer that this is an element of the finished musical speech that must be left to the composer and the critic, while the treatise on harmony deals with musical grammar, with the sequences of related sounds irrespective of pattern. And, in fact, Mr. Pound tells us no more than anyone else. No one will be the wiser

for this: "A SOUND OF ANY PITCH, OR ANY COMBINATION OF SUCH SOUNDS, MAY BE FOLLOWED BY A SOUND OF ANY OTHER PITCH, OR ANY COMBINATION OF SUCH SOUNDS, PROVIDING THE TIME-INTERVAL BETWEEN THEM IS PROPERLY GAUGED; and this is true for ANY SERIES OF SOUNDS, CHORDS, OR ARPEGGIOS." On the contrary, some will be the less wise. It is, for example, only theoretically true that for the ordinary time-intervals of music ANY two chords may follow each other and make sense.

It appears that Mr. Pound's real dissatisfaction is with actual musical practice. He objects to music whose *harmony* is conceived vertically as being music without lateral, rhythmic *movement*; by which he seems to mean music the durations of whose sounds are not fixed; by which again he seems to mean music which can be played in more than one tempo or with variations in the chosen tempo. But these identities and the distinctions they imply are not correct. There is no music without lateral, rhythmic movement, none without fixed duration, and yet none that cannot be played in more than one tempo or with variations in the chosen tempo. For the fixed durations are *only* proportional durations within any tempo;* and the proportions may be emphasized by slight distortion. Nor can any music be played without such distortion except by a mechanical instrument. And this, in fact, is what Mr. Pound wants: rhythmic patterns (which I believe are what he means by the term mechanisms) reiterated by mechanical pianos or, best of all, by machines. At this point one is tempted to imitate the inimitable Mr. Pound:

* That Mozart insisted upon fixed durations is, then, true but not proved by metronome indications in Pound's copy of *The Marriage of Figaro*. There was no metronome in Mozart's day; and these must be the tempos of some editor, probably different from those of another editor. This is worth noting in connection with the Foire de Neuilly method, e.g., the references to Raphael Socius (1556), Manchetto of Padua (fourteenth century), Prosdocimus de Beldemandis (ditto), etc.

"What, mon élève, is the element grossly omitted from the music of machinery . . ."

at this point Mr. Pound looks up brightly . . .

"and to be found in the pea soup of Wagner, the heavy mist of Debussy, and even the diaphanous dust clouds of the post-Debussians . . ." * Mr. Pound continues to regard me brightly . . . and blankly. No answer is offered me.

"The answer, mon contradicteur, is:

The element most grossly omitted from the music of machinery is MUSICAL SOUND. The sounds that are necessary to make a rhythmic pattern interesting and significant are omitted."

That is probably not all I have to say in this review.

August 22, 1928

MUSIC: A SCIENCE AND AN ART. By John Redfield.
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928.

For Mr. Redfield the science of music is applied, useful science. He wants scientists placed in laboratories to investigate and experiment with the tone and construction of the various musical instruments, nearly all of which he considers defective, and he is sure they can improve. They will, one supposes, also investigate the technique of the instruments, as Ortmann⁴⁶ investigated the technique of tone production on the piano, and, one hopes, have more effect upon current superstition than he did. But there they will stop. As Mr. Redfield himself deals with the science of performance, it stops with the instruments and their sounds as physical things; his discussion of the art of interpretation, which deals with the sounds as musical things, rests on no scientific foundation. In other words, while there is a science

* There is no music for which a formula cannot be found that will make it appear ridiculous, not even Antheil's.

of musical performance *as well as* an art, it is not a science of the art, nor is there as yet any such science.

Now science has even less to do with the creating of music. There have been many attempts to formulate a theory of harmony that would account for the relations of sounds as musical facts by their relations as physical facts, the latest and seemingly the best attempt being Mr. Redfield's. These attempts have been encouraged by the fact that for a time musical procedures produced chords that were composed of the most prominent notes of the harmonic series (the notes produced by the partial vibrations of a vibrating string). But the procedures have carried musical materials to a point where most of what is musically significant is not natural. The science of musical sounds as facts of nature can no longer account for their behavior as the materials of music; and changes in this behavior are therefore more likely to come from their further use in music than from the science, which would subject what is artificial and man-made to the limitations of what is natural.

But Mr. Redfield insists that the science of musical sound still has or ought to have everything to do with the idiom of music; that a physical theory of harmony still has practical value; and that a student must learn harmony not in musically significant usage, but in the physical laboratory, where "the harmonic practices of The Masters will all have to be subjected to laboratory verification, and modified to the degree that they are found capable of improvement." As a result, the chords of the last century or two sound bad to him because their structure and tuning are unnatural. Indeed he ascribes their unnatural structure to their unnatural tuning: the introduction of equal temperament "dulled the keenness of the ear's appreciation of natural harmonies" and "broadened the tolerance of the ear in favor of combinations of tones not naturally harmonic," until "almost any combination of tones is now more or less acceptable." But there is not enough difference between the just and the tempered scales to cause a major third or a major chord in the tempered scale to sound like anything but

a major third or a major chord;* and unnatural tuning, therefore, is not a reason for the departures from natural chord structure. One may say rather that the harmonic sense in reaction to existing harmonic materials produced changes which incidentally necessitated the compromises of the tempered scale. And Mr. Redfield's position is that if the harmony of the last century or two is possible only at a cost of harmonic purity, he would rather keep the harmonic purity.

But the attitude of the musician is more realistic. Tovey⁶¹ expresses this attitude when he accepts "the universal law that artistic ideas must be realized, not in spite of, but by means of practical necessities"; and this after pointing out that "there is no art in which the element of practical compromise is so minute and so hard for any but trained scientific observation to observe." Moreover, the choice has already been made, and, as Tovey says, "an intonation which makes nonsense of chords of which every classical composer since Corelli has made excellent sense is a very unjust intonation indeed." In other words, this is old wisdom on what is no longer an issue; and one does not expect anyone demonstrating the practical value of the science of music to attack the tempered scale, or to offer for present adoption a just scale which, with its twelve modes in each of fifteen tonalities, presents the same practical difficulties—for example, of providing keyboard instruments with all the necessary keys—that necessitated abandoning just intonation once before. If it is the modal harmonies Mr. Redfield wants, they are already in use, with the slight alterations dictated by practical necessities.

Since Mr. Redfield has raised the question again, let it be answered completely. According to Ogden⁴⁴ the employment of equal intervals and their multiples is even more primitive and fundamental than the employment of harmonics and their derivatives. This he illustrates by the music of Java, in which the

* This would be true also of intervals mistuned by the more minute divisions of the octave, which Mr. Redfield offers as a possibility to be investigated in the laboratory, after he has objected to the mistuning of the tempered scale.

octave is divided into equal intervals with the ratio of vibration frequencies 519:596, and melodies are successions of this interval and its multiples, which do not lend themselves to harmony since they do not fuse. Our present chromatic scale of equal temperament is, then, as natural as the former scale of untempered harmonics; and it is doubly useful in that it introduces into our music the equal intervals that are not found in the harmonic scale, while it preserves the harmonic trends that are not found in the ordinary scale of equal intervals. It must be noted, however, that when Ogden uses the term natural he refers not only to the nature of sound but to the nature of man; that for him the science of music comprises not only physics but physiology, and especially psychology, which brings him nearer to music as a man-made product. One would, therefore, expect his treatment to be better than Mr. Redfield's; and in fact it is. It is not easy to read, but even in style it has one virtue in not having been written for the *American Mercury*; and those who are interested in the subject should not be deterred by a cumbrous prose and none too clear arrangement of material. On the other hand, it does not deal with instruments; and on these Mr. Redfield writes the more valuable part of his book.

February 13, 1929

BEETHOVEN: HIS SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT. By J. W. N. Sullivan. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927.

This is one of the books on music that come to a reviewer all too rarely but, when they come, compensate him for the others and reconcile him to a miserable career. Most of such books are English, and what sets them apart is their fine intellectual quality. In England there are writers on music who have first-rate minds; and here is one of the best minds in England, a distinguished scientific philosopher, who, occupied with a problem that is at once philosophical and musical, displays a first-rate critical insight into music. His argument, strangely, is not

perfectly ordered, nor is the book concisely written, but its contents, stated with a deceptively unobtrusive simplicity, are a distillation from experience and thought that are profound and important.

Mr. Sullivan is concerned, as he says, "with Beethoven's music solely as a record of his spiritual development. I believe that in his greatest music Beethoven was primarily concerned to express his personal vision of life. . . . The development and transformation of Beethoven's attitude toward life, the result of certain root experiences, can, I believe, be traced in his music." Thus—to skip the detailed correlation which is the larger part of the book—he finds that Beethoven's music differs from all other music, including Bach's and Wagner's, in that it shows organic development to the very end; and he ascribes this to the fact that Beethoven's spiritual attitude grew itself to his final realization of "suffering as one of the great structural lines of human life." A religious attitude like that of Bach, and surely such an attitude as Wagner's, may with time "achieve greater richness and subtlety, but they are incapable of organic growth." But Bach and Wagner are the rule among artists, Beethoven the exception; and this alone gives him philosophical importance. And, while there are a few other examples, "perhaps even Shakespeare never reached that final stage of illumination that is expressed in some of Beethoven's late music." Hence "it is possible that Beethoven's late music is unique, not only in music but in the whole of art."

From this it is clear that when Mr. Sullivan speaks of Beethoven having philosophical importance he means all he says. He believes, as Beethoven did, that in communicating a vision of life his music communicates a genuine knowledge of reality. And this belief leads Mr. Sullivan to the general question whether art ranks with science and philosophy in communicating such knowledge. The prevailing belief until now has been that it does not. But this belief, Mr. Sullivan points out, is only a necessary consequence of another, the materialist, mathematical conception of the universe introduced by modern

science, which has conditioned all other mental activity so completely that he calls it the mental climate of the last three hundred years. According to this conception reality can and must be expressed completely in terms of such elements as space, time, mass, and force, which can be defined and handled mathematically; and naturally if one starts with the belief that only certain perceptions are perceptions of reality, then one is bound to deny that others which appear to be are, in fact, perceptions of reality. But the mathematical conception of the universe was never a necessary one; it represented a choice justified subsequently by the fact that the elements ignored by science happened not to come in to disturb it, so that science could form "a coherent and closed system which is surely a presumption against the existence of what it ignores."* And now, in fact, "the fundamental concepts hitherto employed by science have been shown to be both unnecessary and insufficient. They are in process of being replaced by a different set, and it is perfectly possible that, when the replacement is complete, values [such as are conveyed by the artist] will be established as inherent in reality." This means that if a composition impresses one as an authentic communication of reality one is no longer obliged to deny the impression or explain it away. It means no more; it does not confirm the impression; nor does Mr. Sullivan claim that it does: he has cited recent developments in science only to remove the obstacle in the way of accepting the conclusive testimony of impressions like his own of such music as Beethoven's. And it should be noted that the confirmation of these impressions would affect only the status of the music as a cultural product—the music itself being completely accounted for by Beethoven's own belief, which, like Sullivan's impressions, was independent of confirmation.

* "Recent analysis has resolved the paradox created by the fact that science forms a closed system. It has been shown that it does so in virtue of the fact that physics (the science on which the materialist outlook was based) deals with but one aspect of reality, namely, its structure, and remains perpetually within its own domain by the device of cyclic definition."

I do not disagree with Mr. Sullivan if I point out that the illuminating of the universe by music may be only its indirect effect. Often the universe is illuminated by one's exhilaration, for example, the mere exhilaration produced by alcohol; often such exhilaration accompanies one's appreciation of something accomplished, of a dance with an intricate pattern, for example; and obviously it may accompany one's appreciation of the patterns in a drama, a mathematical demonstration, or a piece of music. One follows musical themes as they go through their experiences and come out of them; their restatement after this manipulation has the effect of a summing-up of all that has happened; and at the end one feels as though one had been through analogous experiences oneself and reached some conclusion about them.

May 21, 1930

THE HISTORY OF MUSIC. By Cecil Gray. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928.

Mr. Gray, because he is writing "for the average intelligent music-lover rather than for the student, and for the general cultured reading public rather than for the professional musician," dispenses with musical illustrations. My own understanding of the matter, on the contrary, is that a person who does not know a piece of music will learn nothing from a statement about it; therefore that a book for the lay reader which deals, as Mr. Gray's does, with unfamiliar types of music and disputes accepted notions should be adequately illustrated, as a book about painting is usually illustrated. Without illustrations it is not suitable for lay readers and merely provides them with phrases they cannot understand about music they do not know. Mr. Gray aims at "striking a mean between the abstruse and the elementary, the scientific and the educational," but this affects only the text; it does not alter the need for illustrating the text.

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Where I do not know the music he writes of, Mr. Gray's comments upon it have no real meaning for me; and I cannot understand the two sides of the quarrel when he is quarreling with someone, much less decide which is right. On the other hand, where my knowledge permits I find his revaluations of music often extraordinarily penetrating, but at times merely unsympathetic or perverse; and his reasoning often brilliant, but at times that of a tooth-and-nail debater. Thus, he gives differences between Graeco-Roman music and early church music to demonstrate that the two have nothing in common, and that one was not, therefore, an adaptation of the other. Since he never cites an authority and almost never names an opponent, one must discover for oneself that these differences are the ones given in the standard works on that period, but that he has simply omitted the similarities which (with the differences) cause the authors to conclude that early church music, as might be expected, was an adaptation of existing Graeco-Roman means to new ends. Against W. J. Turner's belief that the Greeks must have had a music commensurate with their other arts, he offers the general truth that "a race whose outlook is primarily intellectual and logical, and whose peculiar strength lies in the direction of clarity and definition, must inevitably find its most complete and congenial artistic expression in the formative arts, and more particularly in sculpture"—which means that the Germans picked the wrong art. Again, after he has attacked the belief that Greek music had no harmony, because it is not based on conclusive evidence, he argues the contrary, in the absence of evidence, with "Is it not on the face of it unlikely that . . . ?" "Is it not improbable, to say the least, that . . . ?" "Is it not asking too much to expect us to believe that . . . ?"

Nor are Mr. Gray's ends themselves above question. The more naive evolutionist view of musical history that he objects to is wrong—and, one might add, pretty generally discredited by now; but his own attitude is no better. If the evolutionist was "afflicted by a morbid mania for detecting resemblances

and influences where none exist," he is afflicted with a mania for denying them even where they do exist, not to speak of detecting some that are as far-fetched. And if the evolutionist had the bad habit of "regarding a whole school or period as leading up to one or two outstanding figures, in whom all the virtues and qualities of their predecessors are presumed to be contained," one often suspects that he, in his desire to discredit the evolutionists, does more than justice to some of the composers who have been neglected.

October 24, 1936

STRAVINSKY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936.

There are facts in Stravinsky's autobiography, but not all the pertinent facts; there are penetrating observations, but also this statement about Beethoven: "It is in the quality of his musical material and not in the nature of his ideas that his true greatness lies." This statement is incorrect. In his use of his medium Beethoven certainly is one of the greatest of artists; but the detail of substance and form in the first movement of the Ninth Symphony represents the working out of an "idea"—that is, an attitude, a personal vision or awareness of life; and it is as the embodiment of such ideas—or, in other words, by the way it performs its function as art—that Beethoven's music acquires its unique greatness and importance.

Stravinsky makes the statement about Beethoven because he does not want his own music to be judged by its ideas. In composing he sets out not to express ideas but merely to establish order and discipline in a purely sonorous scheme (these are his terms). Nevertheless, his music, no less than Beethoven's, represents the working out of an idea, of a personal attitude; only that Stravinsky's attitude is one that leads him, in writing prose, to state feeling itself with precisely calculated emotionlessness, and, in writing music, merely to es-

ADDITIONAL BOOK REVIEWS

establish an order and discipline in purely sonorous schemes. In other words, the triviality, the sterility, the ugliness of his more recent music represent the poverty of his spirit; the progression of his works records the process of its impoverishment, and he must deny the importance of riches.

Now the factual record, as I have said, is not complete. Stravinsky chronicles the composition of one sonorous scheme after another as though each were in line with the others; and it is not until almost the last page of the book that he even mentions the change in idiom that has alienated the great mass of his listeners ("I believe that there was seldom any real communion of spirit between us"). True, there has been reference to charges of sacrilege occasioned by his treatment of Pergolesi's music in *Pulcinella*; but he has not informed us of the factual basis for the accusations—has not told us that he, who has "always been sincerely opposed to the rearrangement by anyone other than the author himself of work already created," had introduced jazz glissandos into Pergolesi.

These factual omissions are important, for jazz glissandos in Pergolesi arouse a suspicion that Stravinsky's works have not arisen entirely from an austere preoccupation with order and discipline in sonorous schemes. And there is in fact a background for the changes in idiom and style—which he has omitted with studied sobriety, but which Constant Lambert has supplied with equally studied brilliancy in his *Music Ho!*²⁸ This background, according to Lambert, was Diaghilev's attempt to hold the interest of fashionable Paris by creating a vogue for mere vogue with a series of maneuvers in which Stravinsky collaborated and for which he even supplied a formulation of principle: "Toute réaction est vraie." Among other things there were ballets in the post-war scrapbook taste—with settings, choreography, and music of different periods; with music that itself displayed a mixture of styles in melody, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration—the jazz glissando in *Pulcinella*, observes Lambert, being like the photograph of a Negro with a cocktail shaker pasted on an Alma Tadema

reproduction. And even Stravinsky's austere neo-classicism was the last of his reactions for reaction's sake—the sensationalist's final sensation.

January 1, 1938

LONDON MUSIC IN 1888-1889. As Heard by Corno di Bassetto, Later Known as Bernard Shaw. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1937.

The public will not read collections of newspaper or magazine articles on music, and least of all is it interested in reports of concerts and operas of fifty years ago—that was what American publishers said when I tried to get them to bring out Shaw's *Music in London 1890-1894*. If they were right, then the public will not read his reviews of musical events in 1888 and 1889; it will prefer to read Mr. Downes, Mr. Gilman, Mr. Chotzinoff on events of today. And if that is so, then the public is—to put it very mildly—making a great mistake. The performance of Boito's *Mefistofele* which Shaw wrote about on May 29, 1889, can be of no interest to anyone today; but it provided the occasion for Shaw to observe that Gounod's *Faust* was "a true musical creation, whereas Boito has only adapted the existing resources of orchestration and harmony very ably to his libretto. In short, Gounod has set music to Faust, and Boito has set Faust to music"; and that "the house likes Boito's prologue, in spite of the empty stage and the two ragged holes in a cloth which realize Mr. Harris's modest conception of hell and heaven." This is not the best example but merely the shortest; the fact is that the daily events of the musical season elicited from Shaw a flow of comment on music, on musical performance, on the entire musical scene, that is still among the most discerning, the most revealing, the most enjoyable one can read in any language.

Read this comment, read the astounding article on a performance of *Il Trovatore* at the end of the book, the equally astound-

ing article on Verdi; they will—or at least they should—kill your taste for the incompetent, the pretentious, the despicable critical performances of today. These are strong terms, but the terms I would like to use are unprintable; and if you suspect me of extravagance read Shaw, whose remarks about his colleagues are as timely as his remarks about *Il Trovatore*. Of one, disliked by the others, Shaw wrote:

He has the force to write individually, originally, making his mark with every opinion he delivers. Of how many critics in London is it possible to say as much? When one thinks of the average critic, with his feeble infusion of musical dictionary and analytical program, the man who has no opinion, and dare not express it if he had, who is afraid of his friends, of his enemies, of his editor, of his own ignorance, of committing an injustice (as if there were any question of abstract justice involved in the expression of a critic's tastes and distastes), it is impossible not to admire L. E., who, at an age at which all ordinary journalists are hopelessly muzzled by the mere mass of their personal acquaintance, can still excite these wild animosities in the breasts of his colleagues.

And I would say of Shaw that what made him so great a critic was his integrity in relation to his material—by which I mean among other things that he used all his resources of knowledge, taste, and wit in the process of dealing rigorously with the material as it required to be dealt with; whereas the others use the material to show their knowledge, taste, and wit. Mr. Chotzinoff does anything to his subject to appear hard-boiled, blasé, wise to the things which the more naive and impressionable fall for; Mr. Gilman's act is different—he is the *littérateur*, the gentleman—but his subject suffers no less. Our musical life is the worse for a Barbirolli at the head of a New York Philharmonic, a Stokowski all over the place; it is the worse, then, for a criticism which helped to make these things possible; and to believe that Mr. Gilman believed what he wrote of Barbirolli's first appearance here, or of Stokowski's appearances during the past

ten years, I would have to believe him to be without the understanding I know he possesses. Shaw created no such dilemma for his readers.

October 22, 1938

MOZART: THE MAN AND HIS WORKS. By W. J. Turner. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938.

Turner's writings on Mozart—an essay in Volume I of *The Heritage of Music*,^{20a} another in *Facing the Music*,^{62a} and the present book—are among the most treasurable pieces of critical writings we possess, because of what they manage to say about this most extraordinary of all musical artists, whose extraordinary qualities are so difficult to say anything about. At the end of the second movement of the Piano Concerto K.467 you may find that you have stopped breathing under the cumulative pressure of the expressiveness and terrific force of what you have been hearing; but you cannot say what the expressiveness and force are, and all you have been hearing is a long, calm cantilena. As Turner has observed, one experiences the music of Mozart directly and cannot describe the experience. But Turner's strength as a critic is that he is himself an artist, a poet—one of the persons who understand some things not at all but some things better than anyone else. At times, then, Turner is perverse, silly, or otherwise irritating as only a poet can be; but on the qualities of Mozart that are so difficult to describe he writes with a poet's penetration and precision of statement.

He observes, for example, that in Mozart's music there are passion, violence, demoniac intensity—qualities of excess that one does not expect to find in the work of a composer who is thought of as a classical artist. It is, he contends, because the passion and intensity are crystallized into pure musical form, because the excess is brought under control and does not exceed, and the music appears the simplest, the clearest of all, that Mozart's art is classical and he is in fact the supreme classical artist.

And for this reason the music is ambiguous: "When you are a child Mozart speaks to you as a child—no music could be more simple, more childlike—but when you are a man you find to your astonishment that this music which seemed childlike is completely adult and masculine." And even when you are a man, he might have added, you may still hear only a pleasant melody in the second movement of K.467, and not hear anything that should cause anyone to stop breathing. Turner develops his idea when he compares Mozart's music to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*:

It is perfect for children, the most delightful of fairy tales, but when one has grown up (which everybody does not do) one discovers that . . . the simple fairy tale has become profound, terrifying, and mysterious; so mysterious and so uniquely mysterious that to much of Mozart's music one can put no label; one cannot even say whether it is gay or sad, comic or tragic. It is this baffling remoteness from human partisanship and from moral or emotional propaganda . . . allied with an extraordinary intensity which makes Mozart strangely moving and inexplicable.

Writing about the man, Turner is concerned with creating for us the composer of the second movement of K.467—the composer, that is, not of a pleasant melody but of music with terrific impact—not a delicate "child of the dying rococo age," as he is usually thought of, but "a wholly superior man, intensely serious, deeply compassionate, almost all-comprehending," with the great force of his superiority, his pride and honor, as disturbing to lesser men as this force always is; a man, also, with an abundance of sweetness, candor, light-heartedness, and vivacity, and in all these the vital energy which Turner finds unique (there is, he points out, a bigger volume of noise in the last movement of Beethoven's Seventh, but not as quick, as tense a "rush" as in the Overture to *Figaro*: "It is the rumble of thunder compared with the flash of lightning"). Turner's

method of creating this man for us is in large measure to let him create himself through portions of his letters—an excellent method for Mozart, and most successful in the two or three instances where the letters are not translations but the originals. As breath-taking as the rush of sound in the Overture to *Figaro* is the rush of exuberantly, absurdly, but always pointedly mingled German and Italian with which he describes to his sister a performance of opera in Verona. Thus:

Ruggiero, un ricco principe, innamorato di Bradamanta . . . à una bellissima voce ed è già vecchio ha cinquanta cinque anni ed à una leuffige gurgel. Leone, soll die Bradamenta heyrathen, reichissima est; ob er aber ausser dem Theatro reich ist, das weis ich nicht, fà una donna, la moglie di Afferri . . . à una bellissima voce, ma è tanto sussuro nell theatro che non si sente niente. Irene fà una sorella di Lolli dell gran Violinisto, che abbiamo sentito à Vienna. à una schnoffelte voce, e canta sempre um ein viertil zu tardi, ò troppo a buon ora.

He was fourteen when he wrote this; and at the same time he wrote, among other things, the recitative and aria *Misero me* and *Misero pargoletto* K.77, which Wyzewa and Saint-Foix characterize as a work "on the greatest scale that he has produced in this style and one of those in which the precocity of his genius appears most astonishing." But on that subject one could go on forever.

November 5, 1938

MUSIC, HISTORY, AND IDEAS. By Hugo Leichtentritt.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.

This book undertakes "to connect the facts of the history of music with the history of the human spirit, with general culture in its varied aspects, and with the history of political and social conditions which are of preeminent importance for art and science." And we are informed that it originated in "two series

of twelve public lectures on music as a part of general culture, given at Harvard University in 1934-35."

When a man lectures or writes on literature or painting or music the things he says about a play or a picture or a piece of music will have meaning for his hearers only if they have had experience of the play or the picture or the piece of music, or if he gives them experience of it as he speaks or writes. He can assume that most of them know *Hamlet*; but if not it is easy for him to quote the lines that illustrate his point. He cannot, however, assume that they know the music or the architecture of that period; and if he wishes to make a point about it he must let the music be heard or reproductions of the buildings be seen. This is something that is more easily done at a lecture than in a book—for which reason it is often not done in the book; and when it is not done the book has no value for the general reader.

I have gone into this because—to take one example—Dr. Leichtentritt in his second chapter wishes to show the similarity between the Gregorian chant and the Romanesque architecture of the same period, which he can do only by allowing his audience to hear examples of the chant, and to hear in these examples the qualities that have their architectural parallels in the Romanesque style, and then to see these parallels in reproductions of Romanesque cathedrals. Possibly he did all this at the lecture; but there is not a note of musical notation, not a single reference to a place on a phonograph record, and not a single photograph in the entire book, which therefore will be only so many fine-sounding words without real meaning to the general reader.

Having myself no thorough knowledge of the music of early centuries and only the vaguest notions of the other arts, I cannot say whether Dr. Leichtentritt's words about them are as valuable as they are fine-sounding. I do, however, know some of Mozart's music fairly well; I also know something of his life—his extraordinary strength and equilibrium and serenity of mind, his bitter statement that he was a better man than some of the well-

born who mistreated him—and of the sordid causes of his death; and when I encounter the statement, “There seems to have been something fateful in the circumstance that Mozart died in 1791 just as the French Revolution reached the height of its frenzy. Haydn, robust and masculine, could still profit from the tremendous changes that were brought about by the French Revolution. Mozart, more delicate, extremely sensitive, with an almost feminine susceptibility, was so thoroughly a child of the dying rococo age that the rude shocks of the French Revolution were a fatal blow to him”—when I encounter this pretentious nonsense I close the book.

April 12, 1941

THE LIFE OF RICHARD WAGNER. Volume Three. 1859-1866. By Ernest Newman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941.

Ernest Newman's third volume of his *Life of Richard Wagner* appears four years after the second volume; and this delay is inherent in the very nature of what Newman is doing. Where other biographers, he claims, have repeated what he calls *fable convenue*, he is piecing together the story of Wagner's life and period from source material; and he offers his work not only as biography but as an example of correct biographical procedure. The staggering quantity and complexity of the material would make his way of destroying legend and establishing truth difficult enough; but in addition there is the fact that the letters and other documents have been made available only gradually; and he has been delayed by the constant inflow of new material.

To the process of writing this biography Newman brings his lifetime of absorption in the subject, his incredible industry and patience, his eye for what is significant in a document, his ability to piece details together and weld them—with the aid of a lively, if somewhat unconcentrated style—into a fascinating narrative. Since he offers the work as an example of the correct biograph-

ical procedure that he opposes to the *fable convenue* of other writers and to the original work of Glasenapp,²² who "is so blind a partisan that his interpretation of a document, the amount of selection he may make from it, or the general use to which he may put it, can never be relied on," it is well to bear in mind that a few years ago Newman published a similar book on Liszt in which—Carl Engel was able to point out—his intense desire to correct a legendary falsehood led him to misuse documents in the same way as others had misused them on behalf of the falsehood. It may be, then, that Newman will be corrected by those who know the material he has used; but with that reservation one may allow oneself to be fascinated by a narrative which, in this volume, takes Wagner from the Paris production of *Tannhäuser* in 1860 through the disaster of the Vienna *Tristan*, the generous patronage of Ludwig II and its end in further disaster, to the flight from Munich and settling with Cosima in Tribschen in 1866.

The truths that Newman establishes concerning these matters in place of long-accepted notions would take more space than I have; I prefer to point out, as Newman does, their bearing on another long-accepted notion which he is concerned with throughout this work. This is the notion—with which some composers of our own time have explained the indifference or dislike their music has encountered—that the work of a great artist is never rightly understood and valued by his contemporaries; and Wagner's career has been considered an outstanding example. But Newman has long disputed the notion; and he has shown that if Wagner was bitterly attacked he was as warmly defended; and that whatever the opposition of directors of opera houses and musicians whose comfortable routine was upset by his artistic demands, composers whose position was threatened by his ability, pedants who were outraged by his originality, some critics whose ideological positions were bound up with the established order in opera and operatic performance, other critics whose Jewish employers were offended by his anti-Semitism, government officials and others who were scandalized by his per-

sonal conduct and political heresy, and those who simply did not find his music to their taste, as some do not even today—this opposition was outweighed by the interest and enthusiasm with which other musicians and writers and the general music public in Germany welcomed his operas from the start, and which later, at a time when he was an exiled revolutionary, compelled the directors of the opera houses to beg him for permission to produce the works—permission which in some instances he refused out of fear that without his supervision the production would misrepresent the work. In 1852, Newman tells us in his second volume, “there arose that extraordinary demand for Wagner’s scores that showed how swiftly the tide had begun to flow in his direction. . . . The Wagner operas created the greatest enthusiasm everywhere. Special trains were run to Schwerin, Wiesbaden, and other places from neighboring towns. Schwerin alone gave fourteen performances of *Tannhäuser* during 1852.” Even the large court theaters—including even that of Dresden—had to yield to public interest: there were five performances of *Tannhäuser* in Dresden in 1852, twenty in Leipzig the next year. And what defeated Wagner in Vienna and Munich—Newman shows in the present volume—was again intrigue motivated in the ways I have described.

That was in Germany; and in this volume we learn about Paris. Newman’s research and reasoning were answered a few years ago in the *New Republic* by Paul Rosenfeld—answered in part in anecdotal terms suitable for the *Etude*; and in the case of Wagner Mr. Rosenfeld cited a cartoon published in one of the French comic papers, which he characterized as “those clear mirrors of the man in the street”—a cartoon in which a mother said to her child who was playing the piano: “My child, you are striking nothing but false notes,” and the child answered: “Oh, mama, these aren’t false notes. This is *Tannhäuser*.” The real significance of this cartoon we learn from the statement on the first page of Newman’s third volume, amplified on later pages: “Wagner had to contend with the enmity of the corrupt Paris press, which, it is no secret today, was hand-

somely taken care of by the rich Meyerbeer." The press was, then, a mirror of the Paris professional musicians, whose fear and resentment of this dangerous outsider expressed itself also in persistent and vicious undercover mischief-making. But in Paris, as in Germany, Wagner had his supporters; and whatever the effect of the press on the man in the street it did not prevent the man in the concert hall and opera house from being interested and impressed. At the performances of *Tannhäuser* the interest and enthusiasm of the general public were defeated by the unprecedented organized rowdiness of the aristocrats of the Jockey Club, determined to slap down not only an alien composer who dared to defy their wishes, but through him Princess Metternich, and through her the policy of rapprochement with Austria. But "Wagner selections proved the greatest attractions at the Musard and Padeloup concerts during the next few months. Carvalho was only restrained from producing *Tannhäuser* at the Théâtre-Lyrique by the fact that he could not find a suitable tenor. Roger . . . for his benefit at the Opéra-Comique . . . chose the third act of *Tannhäuser* . . . —an unmistakable sign of the interest Paris still took in the work."

This seems conclusive; but I am sure we have not heard the last of "Oh, mama, these aren't false notes. This is *Tannhäuser*."

May 22, 1943

MORE STORIES OF FAMOUS OPERAS. By Ernest Newman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943.

The object of this book, says Newman, is "to help the listener to opera, whether in the theater or by radio, to get more value out of his listening."

An opera begins by being a stage play; and one of the things Newman does in his book is to describe the dramatic action of each opera. He describes it in sufficient detail to make his summary a helpful guide to the person in the opera house, but a less adequate guide to the radio listener, who does not see

where the characters stand, what they do, which one addresses which, and who therefore needs the guidance of the complete text. A person using this text of *Der Rosenkavalier* will get a great deal of detail that Newman omits, most of it unimportant, but one line—the Princess's exclamation to her hairdresser: "Today you have made an old woman of me"—a key line for what happens in the rest of the first act.

An opera carries on its dramatic action with the help of music; and there are many things in the music that the opera-goer should know but is likely not to know, says Newman. Of all the people who have heard *Der Rosenkavalier* how many, he wonders, "have paid any particular attention to the little figure quoted as No. 2a in the following analysis? I do not mean when motive No. 2 is first heard as a whole in the orchestral prelude to the opera—no one can fail to be aware of it there—but some forty or fifty bars later, when it appears, in the condensed form of no more than just these three notes, as a counterpart to another theme. And even if the listener's attention does happen to have been caught by this fragment, how is he to know that Strauss has marked it '*seufzend*,' thereby telling the student of the score in the plainest terms possible that he is expected to hear in it the sigh of the Princess over the love that she is soon to lose forever?" These are things which he must be told, and which, apparently, Newman will tell him; but actually Newman tells him very few of them: he describes long stretches of action without pointing out the recurrence, in the service of this action, of the themes he has quoted. For that matter he describes long stretches of action without even quoting important themes the first time. And where he does mention a detail he ignores the problem of correlating word with actual sound: one cannot merely mention details scattered through the work and expect the listener to catch them; one must point them out to him; and in a book the only way to do this is to direct him to the particular measures in the score, or to the particular places on records. The opera-goer can get the knowledge of the music and of its relation to the action that Newman says he should have

by going through the score at the piano or with records; but he will not get it from this book.

Newman also thinks the opera-goer should know how the opera happened to be written, what its dramatic sources were, how this dramatic material was adapted and used. Some of his material of this kind is interesting—for example, the account of how the original conception of *Der Rosenkavalier* changed in the process of being realized. Some of it is a great and unnecessary to-do about very little—for example, the ten pages devoted to the changing details of the unimportant German and French comedies that were the basis for the libretto of *Die Fledermaus*. What produces this also produces the to-do about the dramatic weakness, in *Boris Godunov*, in the fact that the Czarevitch is on the stage during Boris's monologue and "is allowed to listen to his father's confession of the murder of the child," but that in the later scene with Shuisky Boris sends the Czarevitch from the room "to keep from his son the terrible truth of his guilt in the matter of the murder of Dmitri, after he himself had laid it bare to him in [the] earlier scene!" Newman is too excited about his own brilliant perception to see that Boris's monologue in the earlier scene is addressed only to us, and tells us only his thoughts, and is therefore not heard by the Czarevitch (he makes the same mistake about Boris's first phrases in the *Coronation Scene*). And I have rarely seen pompousness sling phrases around with more confusion and less sense than in the discussion of the original and Rimsky-Korsakov versions of *Boris Godunov*.

The operas which Newman discusses include some of the standard works; there are also some which we are not likely to hear in our lifetime—on the one hand a great work like Berlioz's *Trojans*, on the other hand things like Cornelius's *Barber of Bagdad*; but *Salome* is omitted, though it is part of the standard repertory and is as important as *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier* and is more important than *The Barber of Bagdad*.

Newman is a critic with powers of insight and intellect that one is bound to respect and admire, but also with weaknesses—

one of them being his own admiration of his powers and their works, which causes even his good writing to have an odor of ostentatiousness and pompousness, and which makes even the substance of some of his writings very bad. This book has both good and bad in it; and even with faults and deficiencies that limit its usefulness it is probably the best of its kind.

February 19, 1944

A MINGLED CHIME: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY. By Sir Thomas Beecham. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1943.

Beecham writes (p. 60) that in the summer of 1899 he devoted his spare time to study of "a large bundle" of Brahms's scores, and "formed then the opinion which I have since been unable to vary, that Brahms was essentially a romantic composer, as far removed as is conceivable from the true classical spirit, and generally at his best in smaller forms." Shortly afterward (p. 82) a performance of a Grétry opera in Paris caused him to assemble all the scores he could find of this composer and his contemporaries and to make copies of those that were out of print; and he writes that in the music of Grétry "there is a lightness, a grace and a melodic invention surpassed only by Mozart, while in that of Méhul there is a vein of simple and chivalric romance to be found in no other composer of the day except Weber." And much later (p. 169), in deference to the letters of protest from every corner of England, "we arranged for an early conference at which *Salome* would be trimmed so as to make it palatable to the taste of that large army of objectors who would never see it."

I give these statements not only for themselves but to convey the qualities which make this that rare thing—a book concerned with musical matters that is worth reading and highly readable. What contributes to making it readable is the fact that it is written by a man whose strong interest in music is only one of the interests of an educated Englishman, and whose writing about

ADDITIONAL BOOK REVIEWS

music is therefore enriched constantly by his reading of literature and sharpened by his keen eye for human absurdity. On the other hand it includes confident obiter dicta on world economics and politics which make one grit one's teeth and rush ahead to the next of the observations on music that are so sound, perceptive, brilliant.

These observations tell us a great deal about Beecham—the intensity and unusual range of his musical interest, the excellence of his understanding and taste. And they are made in the course of an account of his activities up to 1924 which tells us more about him that is interesting to know. Journalism—first in England, then in America—has built up the idea of him as a rich amateur who, lacking professional training, used his money to create for himself the opportunities to do the things in music for which he was not prepared and equipped, and who by blundering along in this way long enough acquired competence in doing them—but even then only the competence of a rich dilettante. Actually he began as a youngster endowed with musical talent of professional caliber who happened to be the son of a rich man; being untroubled by the guilt which has led some American sons of millionaires into neurotic contortions and expiation in the form of support of the Communists' termite activities, he used his father's money to buy himself scores of all the music he was interested in, instruction in all the instruments he wanted to familiarize himself with, together with harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, composition, and in this way to give himself a musical training as thorough and professional as a young German with the same talent would have obtained at one of the state conservatories. At the point where the German would have begun to obtain practical experience and skill in conducting by beginning to conduct in a small state opera house, Beecham began to obtain the same practical experience and skill by knocking about with a touring opera company; where the German would have moved on to larger state opera houses, Beecham helped to finance the orchestras, choruses, and opera companies with which he enriched the musical

life of his country at the same time as he developed himself into one of the world's great musicians. If money has ever been better used I haven't heard about it.

September 21, 1946

THE LIFE OF RICHARD WAGNER. Volume Four. 1866-1883. By Ernest Newman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946.

Ernest Newman has completed his gigantic *Life of Richard Wagner* with a fourth volume of more than seven hundred pages that are filled with the laborious piecing together and interpreting of documentary evidence concerning the happenings in Wagner's life from 1866 to his death in 1883. The matters with which those seven hundred pages deal—the relations between Wagner and Nietzsche, the building of Bayreuth, the completion of *Die Meistersinger*, the *Ring*, and *Parsifal*—are important and interesting (though the laboriously arrived-at detail is sometimes wearying); but more interesting, for me, is the nine-page appendix with which the volume—and the entire work—ends.

This appendix, entitled *Bombastes Furioso*, is concerned with the review of the third volume by the late Carl Engel in the April, 1941, issue of the *Musical Quarterly* (a footnote tells us that the appendix, written in the summer of 1941, is printed "precisely as it was then, though Dr. Engel died in 1944"). "Dr. Engel," writes Newman, "has so often honored me with his disapproval of myself and all my works that from sheer repetition. I have long since ceased to be flattered by the compliment." But this time, "having persuaded himself . . . that Wagnerism and Nazism are identical in root, flower, and fruit, he now suggests that if only we realized that to give up Wagner's music would merely be to give up 'the music of Klingsor who for one hundred years has numbed our senses

with his witchcraft' and 'allowed to grow up round us a garden of gorgeous flowers that at last have revealed themselves as poisonous and death-dealing,' then 'we should retaliate, then we should ban and burn every scrap of Wagner's music and writings, and every book written about the amazing wizard, beginning with the books of the Anglo-Wagnerian Ernest Newman.' " *

A monstrous suggestion, certainly; and, Newman continues, "if I have not made a practice of replying to Dr. Engel's ill-tempered comments on myself and my work during the last dozen years or so it is because I would as soon have thought of going round with an antiseptic cloth wiping up the slaver of a rabid dog. But I feel that I ought not to bring the present biography to a close without some exposure of the manners and the methods of this gentleman." For this purpose he discusses in detail a paragraph from Engel's review which "provide[s] a perfect exposure of the bombastic ignoramus he mostly is."

This is the paragraph:

Appendix II [of the third volume] professes to deal with "the 'madness' of King Ludwig." If anything were needed to show the author's peculiar standpoint it is these three pages of print wherein, among other wild shots, the author accuses the "alienists" of having done "so obligingly" the Bavarian politicians' "dirty work" for them in 1886. Verily, one does not have to be an alienist or a psychiatrist to recognize the symptoms of Ludwig's mental malady. One has but to read the fragments of the King's own diaries . . . to gain an appalling glimpse into the suffering of that poor, perverted soul. Mr. Newman, with all his casuistry, cannot change the case-history of the royal patient and make him out a normal man, fit to reign over a kingdom.

*Professor Lang's method of dealing with this deadly quotation (in the *Musical Quarterly* of July, 1946) is to give Newman's sentence only as far as "fruit" (changing "having" to "had"), and then to write at length on the connection between Wagnerism and Nazism, as though Newman's point of attack were only Engel's opinion that they were connected.

And Newman contends, for one thing, that it misrepresents his handling of the subject. If he argued in the third volume—as he now does again—that Ludwig was not insane, it was not in order to “make him out a normal man, fit to reign over a kingdom.” He not only discussed Ludwig’s sexual abnormality but described the excessive shyness and other behavior of an emotionally maladjusted person—who nevertheless showed himself to be, in many situations, intelligent and “sane.” And Engel ignores what Newman “expressly said, in the eleventh line of the Appendix, that ‘[Ludwig] had, of course, become quite impossible as a king’; not, however, because he was mad, but because he would not give proper attention to what he had come to regard as the tiresome and futile business of kingship.” But in addition Newman contends that whereas he is alleged merely to “profess” to deal with the matter, actually it is Engel who in his paragraph betrays the fact that he speaks without knowledge of the published documents that Newman examined—documents which, says Newman, demonstrate “that Ludwig had never been anyone’s ‘patient’ for his ‘mental malady,’ and least of all the ‘patient’ of the four doctors who certified his incurable derangement in 1886”; that “not one of these men had ever examined him in any way, ever been in his presence, exchanged a single word with him”; and that they were the willing tools of a group of political conspirators who “wanted, and set about obtaining, a medical voucher only to give their coup d’état an appearance of legality afterwards.”* And at the

* Lang writes: “To expose what a ‘bombastic ignoramus [Carl Engel] mostly is’ Mr. Newman offers a ‘perfect exposure’ in the case of Ludwig II of Bavaria.” Actually Newman offers his exposure not “in the case of Ludwig II of Bavaria” but in the case of a particular paragraph of Engel’s review; and here again Lang omits the paragraph and Newman’s demonstration of the ignorance it reveals. Instead he quotes Newman’s description of his own exhaustive study of the documentary material on Ludwig, but only to make the false statement that the result of this study is that Newman “rehabilitates the King, pronounces him hale and hearty”—after which he argues at length that Ludwig was insane, as though Newman’s point of attack were merely Engel’s opinion on that matter.

end he says: "I have gone into this matter at such length because this one paragraph of Dr. Engel's provides in concentrated form a perfect sample of all the defects, congenital and acquired, of his mind. . . . He is a case for the pathologists."

But to me this appendix of Newman's is itself a very curious performance. Authors reply to their critics; but they do it in a letter or an article published at the time of the criticism; they don't give the reply—and the criticism—the status of an appendix in the book itself several years later—certainly not when they liken the criticism to "the slaver of a rabid dog." Newman's explanations why he hasn't answered Engel in the past dozen years and why, after all, he does answer him now are, to me, unconvincing—each throwing doubt on the other: a man who had felt as indifferent to the criticism as to "the slaver of a rabid dog" would, it seems to me, be able to complete his work untroubled by the feeling that he "ought not" to complete it without exposing the criticism; and if he is not indifferent to it now one wonders whether he was indifferent before. In that connection I am struck by his intemperate language, which is not that of indifference—the indifference he would feel toward mere vicious stupidity; and so the question arises whether in those dozen years there wasn't something else that he was *not* indifferent to. And the answer is that there *was* something else, which he doesn't mention.

There was, in 1935, Engel's review¹⁸ of *The Man Liszt*,⁴² in which he charged and demonstrated that Newman had mistranslated, misinterpreted, and otherwise mishandled some of the documentary source material to make it yield the conclusions he wanted. The charge and the demonstration—concerning a man of Newman's eminence and with his pretensions in biographical method—were sensational, and one waited for the refutation from Newman; but none appeared, and now that I have taken the trouble to look up the material I know why: none was possible. The

I don't need to say what would happen to a physicist or a geneticist who, writing about someone's work in a scientific journal, suppressed the essential part of the material and misrepresented the rest.

documents are the letters of Liszt and the Countess d'Agoult of the year 1833, in which their relation began; and in the volume in which they are published all of Liszt's, many undated, others with dates from August through December, are given first; then the four of the Countess, the first two undated, the others dated May 20 and 26, "y sont joints," says the editor, meaning that they are added in a group after Liszt's, not interpolated among his. Yet, as Engel pointed out, Newman, coming to the end of Liszt's letters, writes: "At this stage we have apparently the first of Marie's letters to him that have been preserved. She addresses him as 'Monsieur,' and discusses points connected with literature and music." This, said Engel, was in order to make the letter support Newman's contention that the Countess was not the pursuer but the pursued: that is, as late as December, 1833, after ardent letters from Liszt, she is still formal and reserved. And Engel pointed out that Newman omits the date, May 20, of her third letter, in which she addresses Liszt as Franz (which Newman also omits) in one of several impassioned passages, including a postscript in which she explains her absurd demands by the fact that she loves him "bêtement" sometimes, and at these times no longer understands that she could not and ought not be an absorbing thought for him as he is for her (Newman, at one point, translates "je suis absurde" as "I am not absurd").

And long before 1935 there was Engel's review¹⁹ of *The Unconscious Beethoven*,⁴³ in which he argued convincingly, as I recall it, that the evidence did not justify Newman's conclusion that Beethoven's deafness had been caused by syphilis. I happened to be in London in the fall of 1928 when Newman, in a Sunday article, discussed people's unwillingness to hear the occasionally sordid truth about the lives of great composers and cited as an example the fact that when he had proved Beethoven had had syphilis an American critic had objected to his irreverence. This caused me to wonder whether he had seen Engel's review; and I wrote twice to ask him, but got no answer. In the light of the *Bombastes Furioso* appendix I have no doubt now

that he *had* seen the review, and that he had already begun the strategy of remaining silent as long as Engel made criticisms that were valid and effective and waiting until Engel said something stupid, and of then claiming that such stupidity was what he had ignored all these years.

But after Engel's demonstration concerning *The Man Liszt* one read *The Life of Richard Wagner* without the assurance one has to have about that kind of book—that its author hasn't omitted the date of this document or inserted a "not" in that one to make it prove what he wants to prove. And now one is anything but reassured by Newman's method of dealing with that demonstration, in the *Bombastes Furioso* appendix which he has made the conclusion of his monumental work.

What he has done is to provide a striking illustration of the fact that criticism is personal not only in the sense of involving a particular person's equipment of critical insight and intellect, but in the sense of involving the whole person. Newman the man is in the writing with Newman the critic—a decidedly unpleasant man too, as he comes through the writing: obtrusively conscious of the eminence and brilliance of Ernest Newman, pompous, overbearing, ruthless in his determination to win an argument, and in the end guilty of tactics like those of *The Man Liszt* and *Bombastes Furioso*. And criticism, it turns out, is a moral activity: most often it fails from lack of competence; but the competence of a Newman can be defeated by faults of character.

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